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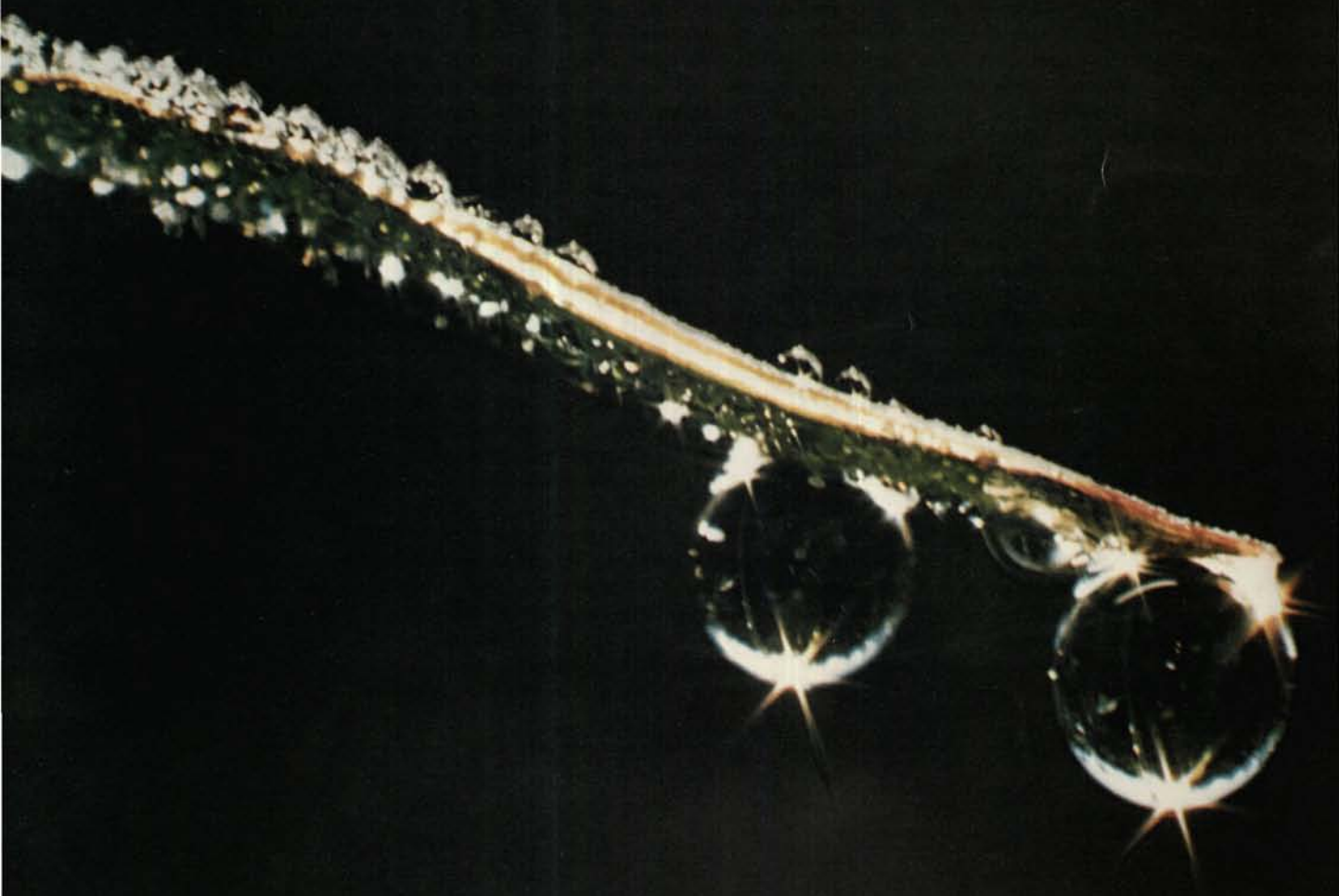

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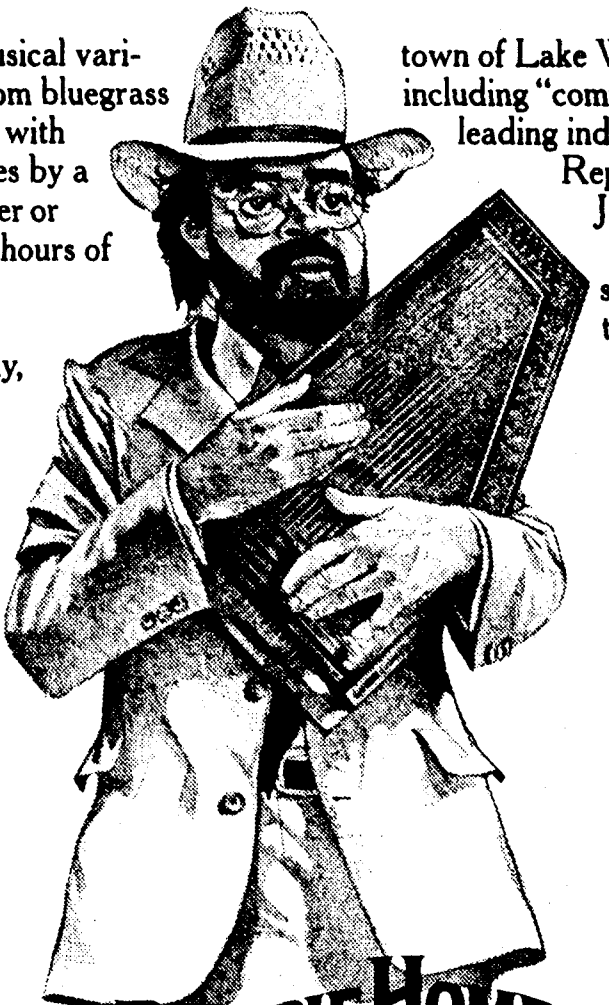

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for his collection of stories

The Heart Never Fits Its Wanting

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This quarter, something from the regulars of the NAR lineup: Leo Hertzel on the beat he knows best, the North Country—this time northern Wisconsin where the navy's ELF antenna waits patiently for the chance once more to talk to submarines around the world; David Hellerstein, looking with a mixture of horror, bemusement, and remorse at the world of those for whom civilization's stresses are more than can be borne; Larry Sturhahn talking of Ronald Reagan, the Ides of March, the debatable *foreverness* of movies; Ken Lash reminding us that who governs best governs not necessarily with a kind heart. And the usual more, of fiction and poems, of books and a bit of travel. May your summer be an escape.

Some postscripts about the spring season just ending, a good one for the NAR. David Hellerstein's essay from the March 1980 number, "A Death in the Glitter Palace," will be featured in *The Pushcart Prize, VI: Best of the Small Presses,* to be published later this year.

The National Endowment for the Arts has announced a grant of $5,380 to the NAR for the express purpose of building circulation by means of a direct mail campaign, the grant to be matched by the magazine.

And two honors of more than fleeting interest:

On April 21st, at a luncheon in the grand ballroom of the Plaza Hotel in New York City, *The North American Review* received the 1981 National Magazine Award for Fiction. The awards are sponsored by the American Society of Magazine Editors under a grant from the Magazine Publishers' Association, and competing magazines are judged in ten different categories by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

And a week earlier *The Heart Never Fits Its Wanting,* the collection of short stories by Lee K. Abbott, Jr., published last year by the NAR, was named the recipient of the 1981 St. Lawrence Award for Fiction. The award carries a cash award of $1000 to the author.

Champagne for everybody!

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★ THE NORTH AMERICAN ★

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Holiday in the Tatras:

A Polish Interlude

The region of the Polish Tatras is, among the world's mountain resorts, one of the few yet mercifully untouched by that international blemish to elevated beauty, the jet set ski brigade. Rising starkly at the southern edge of Poland, with the Czechoslovakian border run like a treacherous high wire from peak to peak, it has had developed to a sufficient degree its slopes and trails, without transmogrification into the shaved-mountain, chalet-disco centers of the Rockies or the Alps. Indeed how could the only formidable natural boundary of a perennially besieged country turn into anything so trifling? There is here an ageless culture preserved by a persevering people, and if, as the female feature writer of an American ski magazine recently declared, "the chair lifts are terribly inferior," then what of its folk dances compared to those of Aspen? Or its wedding rituals seen next to the divorces of Vail? Aside from the hundreds who come here in the summer to climb, and the thousands who come in the winter to ski, there are many who come—for it is one of the few places left to come—believing as Hilaire Belloc did, that "mountains were not made for the amusement, but for the religion of man."

In the first week of February, toward the end of a misbegottenly mild Polish winter, we packed our Syrena for the journey south. The name *Syrena* possesses various connotations for a Pole, connected as it is with the valiant mermaid, symbol of his capital, the modern travel bureau, and the most mocked and disparaged of Polish automobiles—this one which was to carry us eight hours into the mountains. One of the more outstanding features of the two-door model is a front seat that actually lifts up off the floor, and in extreme cases can be hoisted out of the car, for the seating of those in the back. Despite this mobility, there was barely room for the four of us after we had filled the car with a week's provisions (the theory being that one queued in Warsaw's empty shops before going anywhere because the shops elsewhere were even emptier; at the time of this trip there were the by then habitual shortages of meat, butter, sugar, plus humiliating absences of toilet paper, shampoo, and washing detergent). Our supplies had been strengthened by the arrival a few weeks before of a food package sent by friends from the States. It had contained a large number of canned fruits and vegetables as well as a Polish Krakus ham, which my Polish friends had regarded with tempered amusement. One christened the event "The Repatriation of the Polish Pig," a reversal from the officially applied advice here of "Go west, young Ham."

Bundled with blankets about our legs, we started south from Warsaw, joining, it would seem, most of the student population of the city. Before leaving I had asked some students their plans for the vacation, and they were almost unanimous in responding "the mountains"—save one high school boy who was spending his vacation in Silesia, loading coal onto railway wagons. "My country needs people to work now," he had explained stoically, "and it needs the coal." So, with some of his schoolmates, he had enlisted his help.

* * *

Out past the last towering apartment block and into the low, featureless plain. I have been depressed by every ride into the countryside of central Poland. The villages that spring up so haphazardly seem nothing more than clusters of square, flat-roofed houses, un-systematically placed, constructed of the cheapest brick and concrete, connected by lanes of horse-trod mud. The walls of some houses are begun in one material, continued in another, sometimes reverting to the first, leaving an unsightly mosaic to the financial vicissitudes of the owner/builder. One soon enough tires of the novelty of watching horse-drawn peasant wagons pass. The physical historian can, I suppose, look upon the flat table land, stretching undiminished on either side, and entertain thoughts of the charges and forays, the sudden troop offensives and the fatal tank aggressions, indeed the whole long and varied panorama of foreign incursion that has thrived on this ground, but such ruminations were not, in the late winter of 1981, rewarding pursuits. I read.

The book that proved to be a compliment to the dreary landscape was a very recent (1980) guide book to Poland, published in English, French, German, Spanish and Hungarian, by Interpress Publishers of Warsaw. Though I had bought it ostensibly to read about Zakopane, the cultural capital of the Tatras, it proved enlightening on a multitude of national concerns. (It should be mentioned that, though its publication date is 1980, it still falls under the classification "BS"—"before Solidarność.") On the formation of the country after the Second World War: "The Nationalization of Industry Act of January 1946 recognized the earlier wishes for worker control of most factories in a legal, official way. In June of the same year a universal referendum was carried out in which people gave their opinion on fundamental issues concerning the government of Poland. The referendum and the elections to the Legislative Seym [parliament] which followed gave a decided victory to the programme of the party on the democratic side. The Polish Republic became the Polish Peoples' Republic." On the political system: "The Polish Peoples' Republic is a socialist country in which power is vested in the working people of town and countryside." On the Poles at work: "The national per capita annual income of $2,000-2,800 means that Poland is a country of moderate wealth." And: "We only know about unemployment from history and newspaper reports from some other countries." On agriculture: "Cows are bred mainly for milk production because in contrast to other peoples the Poles like first and foremost to eat pork." On the economy: "Some countries increase their national revenue by selling their natural resources and others more depend on industry, agriculture, and trade. The Polish economy happily

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combines considerable natural resources, developed industry, and agriculture, with active participation in international commerce."

My eyes drifted back out the window. At the outskirts of larger towns the overstated grey apartment blocks passed, though occasionally, as if in ready rebuke of the Western journalist's renowned color bias in limning Eastern Europe, one was seen hideously painted in violent colors—each cubicle a new, warring shade from the ones above and below, like a child's colored playbox—so that one was left, in its wake, pining for ashen. There was in many of the towns we passed a strident boosterism—slogans, usually in red and white, hung above factory gates and slung across overpasses, reading: "A United and Strong Poland," "The Future Depends On a Strong Poland and Industrious Poles," "The Higher the Level of Work, the Higher the Level of Life," and one, addressed to we knew not whom: "We Want to Work and Create in Peace."

Once outside Krakow (one of the sootiest cities of architectural value in all of Europe) one could begin to make out the glad changes, in man and nature, that convince the traveler he has journeyed. The earth rose from its sleep, from flat to mountainous, from brown to white. Further along the air changed from damp to dry, the forests from deciduous to conifer. As we puttered upward the horse-drawn wagons became horse-drawn sleighs, the three-room apartments of the cities became three-story houses, and the brittle hodge-podge of the peasant house gave way to the Arcadian wood of the mountaineer hut. There is a saying, learned by every Polish schoolchild, about the last of Poland's Piast rulers, Casimir the Great, that he "found Poland built in wood and left it built in stone." Since then, of course, Various the Lesser have rebuilt it of brick and concrete and cinder block, and it is, for anyone coming into the Tatras, a joy to find it of wood again. Even the bus stops here are neat, timbered A-frames and though, like the pagoda phone booths in an American Chinatown, they look somewhat gimmicky, they still act as indisputable guideposts of a new terrain. One begins to sense, in these first few moments, what is to be confirmed in the subsequent days—that the inextirpable Eastern European backwardness, which can make certain aspects of life in the cities so leaden and uncharmed, here in the mountains works to benevolent effect, keeping everything in a state of reverent, unspoiled grace. When in darkness we arrived at Koscielisko, where we had rented rooms in the home of the local seamstress, a fine snow was falling, lights were dim in response to a weakened power supply, and one was warned of the approaching mountaineers' sleighs by the crystal tinkling of a small silver bell tied about the horses' necks.

* * *

The next morning we rose early and walked to Zakopane. In the daylight one could better see the residences that border the road, or perch on the hills between the village and the town. (Sadly, there seem to be no zoning restrictions: one can build however he wants, so it is not all a log Utopia.) The majority of the houses are still of wood—some recently built, glazed and golden, and older, more darkly grained ones. They are often two or three stories, with a slight A-frame middle section, widely glassed and a decoration deeply carved, often of sunbeams stretching outwards from the top of the window. Then two wings, with perhaps a poetic balcony or two, and dormer windows. The authentic houses have between each log a layer of tightly braided straw (there is a village where the maximum number of trees to a house is four); a few have to guard them the fluffy, snow-white dog of the Tatras, similar to a Samoyed in its benign countenance, standing next to his own miniature, wooden-arched mountain hut. From the distance Zakopane appears as a geometrician's delight—all manner of man-made triangles, highlighted in white snow. Rising between the dark, thin branches of the ancient forest, they seem to call out for a cubist Breughel.

We entered the town from the west, along the street where the great families of Zakopane have always lived; here larger houses are often designated with a plaque to those who built and lived in them. Further along, toward the center, is an old wooden church characteristic of the region, with a small connecting cemetery. Again, most of the memorials are of wood, simple crosses with etched floral designs, and at one grave an unusual representation of Christ, which I had seen at a small chapel along the road the day before. The Christ figure, primitively carved, is wearily seated with his head tilted heavily into his hand, his face bearing an expression of vast woe. I was told it is a popular pose in Polish religious sculpture, and is called: "Christ Worrying."

Among those buried in the cemetery are Dr. Tytus Chałubiński, who first proclaimed the airs of Zakopane to be salutary to tuberculosis patients; Sabała, the celebrated story-teller of the mountains, and Stanislaw Witkiewicz, dramatist and artist in late 19th Century bohemian Krakow, who like many Polish men-of-letters came often to the mountains, and, unlike many, de-

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signed a chapel here. These mountains possess such dissimilar associations as that with Karol Wojtyka, who came to various parts to hike and camp, and who, of all the Polish hearts in which he is held in esteem, enjoys his deepest and most devoted esteem in the hearts of the mountaineers; and with Lenin, who passed his time in nearby Poronin, hiding from the secret police before going on to Switzerland. With what many consider apt homage, the Poles have constructed to his stay an ill-visited museum and invented a calumnious, oft-told story. It is this: On an anniversary of Lenin's birth the Soviets approach a Polish director and ask him to make a film of "Lenin in Poland." On the night of the premiere all of the top Soviet leaders are gathered in the auditorium. The film begins with a scene of a couple in bed. Enraged, one of the leaders stands up and demands: "Who is that woman?" "Why that's Madame Lenin," replies the Polish director. "And who's that man?" "That's Trotsky," answers the Pole. "Then where's Lenin?" he cries at last, exasperated. "Lenin," says the director, "is in Poland."

* * *

Once into Zakopane's center, one sees its resemblance to its sister resort city on the sea, Sopot. For as in Sopot there is one main, pedestrian shop-lined street that drops toward the sea, here is the same climbing into the mountain. Though there are predominantly tourists, one can occasionally spot a man in the stiff white wool trousers of the region; or, more spectacular, marvel at the carrying methods of the old mountaineer women who, before exiting a shop, put their wicker baskets on the counter, wrap them in a large white sheet, then hoist the works onto their backs, tying the ends of the sheet beneath their chins. My guidebook says of Zakopane: "The post-war years brought an amazingly dynamic development to the town in connection with the new kind of tourist to appear here, different from the pre-war kind. Now the resort was open not only to an intellectual and prosperous élite but also to the broad mass of the working population as well as young people from schools and universities." This "broad mass" is, admittedly, cossetted in Zakopane. There are special "houses" for different factions of the work force, the finest being a resplendent mansion, reminiscent of the hospitable hunting lodges in the American Northwest, built at the top of the main street for coal miners. There are, on this street, a few restaurants, cafes (aptly named "milk bars"), and, at the time of our visit, a Wawel chocolate shop which, like its kin in Warsaw, was appallingly bare. It may seem frivolous in a society deprived of meat and butter to bemoan the absence of chocolate, but there is something genuinely pathetic about a sweet shop—set with its pair of tables and chairs for sipping hot chocolate of an afternoon—whose glass counters must stand shamefully bare. Wawel is Poland's most acclaimed chocolate and one could not, in the last few years, praise it without hearing how much better it had been before the war. (The post-war years evidently did not bring an "amazingly dynamic development" to chocolate.) One cannot help but wonder if the sudden withdrawal of even its inferior lineage is not partly the result of insulted Polish "chocolatiers" taking a just revenge.

* * *

Into the mountains. Most days we started off in another direction, entering at some new point the range that loomed in front of us. We hiked in the Chochołow Valley and also, after a winding bus ride, to Lake Morskie Oko, "The Eye of the Sea," 1,393 meters above sea level. The eye was frozen, or closed, at the base of rocky precipices, and a thin, diminishing file of hikers could be seen traversing it, reminding me of a scene from "The Gold Rush." This land of an eerie, Ice Age discontinuousness, so close to Czechoslovakia, has long been a point of contention between the two countries. (The man credited with gaining it for Poland is Count Zamoyski, who owned a great deal of the surrounding property. An eccentric aristocrat, he is said to have slept on his work desk, using the Oxford English Dictionary as a pillow.) On our way down the mountain we were rewarded with a clean, sun-lit view into Slovakia (as everyone here called it): snowy pine forests and an impalpable quiet, pierced only by the far-away voice of a tiny figure, seen below on the other side of the border, calling after his horse and sleigh.

Other days were less dramatic, though following the same pattern—long walks into untouched wilderness, escaping further from the clut-

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ter of the world. Perennially a refuge, the mountains were for us, coming from the on-going chaos of Warsaw, even more so than they might have been; our feelings of lightness and unconcern seemed greater, the higher we climbed. At such a distance we felt far removed from strikes, which seemed impossible to touch us, and invasions, which seemed equally incapable of reaching us. Eventually we arrived at restaurants or shelters high in the folds. The fare was edifyingly good; bowls of Zurek (described on translated menus as "a sour Polish peasant soup") with bits of kielbasy and a hard-boiled egg—your own Morskie Oko—floating about. Also plates of hot bigos, a superior sauerkraut, possessing its own, often-unidentifiable bits; crumbly brown bread, hot cups of wine or glasses of hot beer with a lone clove, like an unsolvent nail, gaining the surface. There was also a drink known as "mountaineer's tea," which my friends joked was probably half tea and half spiritus before learning that it was. In a brief inspiration I thought of returning to the States to start a Polish restaurant at a ski resort, and calling it, with a nod to the prevailing way of life, "Après-Ski's."

On Sunday we went to the village of Chochołow for morning mass. We found the church in the middle of a timbered village, built of stone. We took seats in the back, behind a pew of traditionally-attired male parishioners, each with his rounded felt hat standing upright on the pew in front of him. Across a wide, wood-boarded aisle their womenfolk sat, some in leather coats, others darkly shawled, all with kerchiefs as floriferous and brilliant as their own hand-painted paschale eggs. When we entered they had already begun the service on their own initiative, singing the first hymn without organ accompaniment. (Unfortunately the only such, and the most beautiful.) The mountaineers have an idiosyncratic singing style best accompanied by fiddle or violin, or left alone. It is characterized by a certain anarchy of pitch, various voices at what seem random moments breaking out above the others, with what black gospel singers might call "soul" or "inspiration" but at times seems vaguely reminiscent of the piercing glossolalia of Arab song. In any case the singing was strangely beautiful from these mountain choirs. It was at this village mass that we learned our first news since leav-

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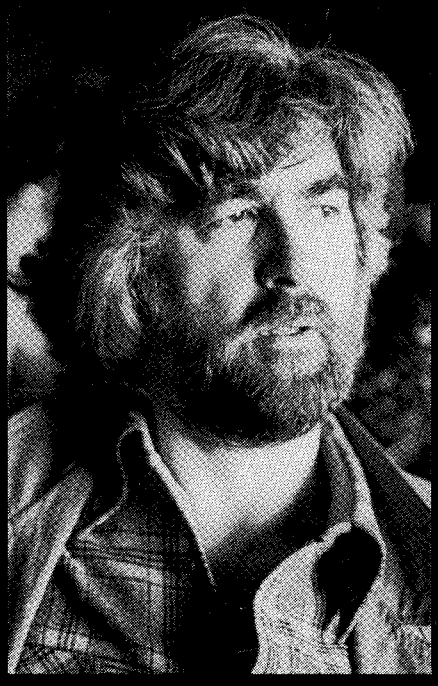

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ing Warsaw—a special service was to be called on Tuesday evening in Zakopane for the state of Poland.

I shall never forget the unique processional of this service. Most of the town and tourists were already gathered so that, as often happens at religious services in Poland, the crowds of faithful filled the vestibule and blocked the entrance before spilling clustered out of doors. Minutes before the service was to begin, from out of the shadows behind the church a troop of mountaineers, elegant in fancy dress, came like some re-created ancient guard. They carried carved walking sticks and, many, shoulder bags, a sign that they were traveling overnight from villages far away. They wore white trousers with ankle pompoms of red and black, and a wide black stripe running up the side of either leg to a colorful spurt of embroidery on either thigh. (Generally the same shape, the intricacies of this design vary according to family, like the kilt plaids of the Scottish klans.) Their shoes were black boots or more traditional, canoe-shaped loafers of soft leather with stray laces tied halfway up the calf. On their heads were the domed, black, disc-like hats with their enigmatic band of white sea shell and proudly mounted eagle feather. Some wore white capes, wildly embroidered about the shoulders, over billow-sleeved white blouses; others sleeveless brown sheepskin vests. The whole array was untouched by modern times save for the shoulder bags and the pin, on some men's breasts, of Solidarność. There were a few women but the men dominated, their long, dark, angular faces grave as befitted their mission. An American from any industrial city of the North could note a familiarity of visage—most of these people have someone from the family in America—before they grouped at the church's portals for the service inside. After all the fret and concern of the preceding months, the now customary doubt of what the morrow would bring, we felt a great relief in watching this pageantry, which had not changed over so many years and under so many occupations, and which, regardless of what occurred in the minds of powerful but finally inconsequential men, would not change for years to come.

* * *

On one of the last days we went to visit the wooden church at Debno. It is half surrounded by a rill where the village women do their wash, its low, undulating shingle roof lightly tinged with moss. The church is famous for various reasons, the most infamous of which is that it was once the object of an American bid for purchase. This seems, at first hearing, to be one of those ignominious moments in the history of the American moneyed class, in their not always honorable efforts to "acquire tradition." (This unforgettable phrase was once used, without a trace of irony, by a sports director I was interviewing on the occasion of his quite modern complex securing a heralded horse race.) I had heard Poles, several times, tell with disdainful glee of the American who "came, saw, and bargained," and their inspired flights as they imagined the relic rebuilt in Texas, Chicago, or Greenpoint. But the story given us by the local priest is that the church was legally up for sale and transplant, to save it from a power plant which was planned nearby. It was then that not a single man, but a Polish-American organization offered to buy it for resettlement at the shrine of Czestochowa outside Doylestown, Pennsylvania. The price suggested for it, now fifteen years ago, was $80 million.

Eventually the plans for the plant were altered, and the church was allowed to stay. It has an intriguing interior, all of wood, with fragile, one-dimensional icons that remind one of cardboard figures—stark but at the same time droll compared to the curvaceous cherubs of the Baroque. There is a very excellent polychromy, 500 years old and still in vivid shades. The legend is that Janosik, the fair mountain bandit (a Robin Hood of the Tatras) brought, for the decoration of the church, uncanny pigments from unknown corners, the like of which have never been seen again. The lay reader's stand, along with several other pieces, has been added over the years, all hand-carved by an uneducated, octogenarian villager by the name of Jozef Janos. Several years ago, we were told, Graham Greene purchased his "Stations of the Cross" series.

* * *

We were moved downstairs on our next to the last day, occupying our hosts' living room because of the unexpected arrival of an East German family. They had been assumed not to be coming, as Poland had become in the last few months, to borrow a phrase from Cyril Connolly, "the condemned playground" of the Soviet bloc. I, being the Westerner, was less surprised, knowing the indomitable spirit of the German holiday maker. (They did confess that only non-Party members were being allowed into Poland.) But it was a decidedly Polish crowd this season, more so than in the past, and I remember full well that these were the mountains that the Czech, in a recent Polish cartoon, banged his broom against, asking for quiet.

On our last walk through the village we found a wedding party in front of the church, readying to depart. Four sleighs were lined against the churchyard gate; the bridal sleigh was tied to two handsome white mares, each with a pine branch tied above her mane like an evergreen plume. The drivers loitered about in white trousers and leather coats, sharing rounded, unlabeled vodka bottles with the village ruffians. When the newlyweds were seated in their sleigh, the two groomsmen, dressed in flowing brown coats with a tri-color ribbon swung about the front, mounted their steeds. Thus stationed in the middle of the street they sang on horseback, in loud and quavering voices, a prothalamion to the young couple. After several more unintelligible verses they began a slow trot, followed in turn by the sleighs, the whole procession moving quietly across the snow to its three-day fete.

And I am reminded again of Belloc, who added, after recounting a traditional English Christmas, what also applies here: "This, which I have just described, is not in a novel or a play. It is real, and goes on as the ordinary habit of living men and women. I fear that set down thus in our terribly changing time it must sound very strange and, perhaps in places, grotesque, but to those who practice it, it is not only sacred, but normal, having in the whole of the complicated affair a sacramental quality and an effect of benediction; not to be despised.

"Indeed, modern men, who lack such things, lack sustenance, and our fathers who founded all these rituals were very wise."

The following day we drove back to Warsaw, returning to a city and a government with a new prime minister since the week before.

—Peter Kelser

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LEO J. HERTZEL

A MESSAGE FROM CLAM LAKE

The town of Clam Lake, Wisconsin, rests at the junction of Wisconsin 77 and county road GG (pronounced GíGi) in the green depth of the Chequamegon National Forest about thirty miles south of Lake Superior. The forest covers over a million acres of lakes, streams, and trees. Deer roam freely on and off the fire roads. There are wolves, fish, bear, and beaver. "Not many folks live over around Clam Lake," says a man in Hayward. "You'd have to walk all day to find a hundred." Tourists from Chicago and Milwaukee who come up for the camping and the fishing like to call the area "God's Country." "It's great to be up here in God's Country," they say, climbing out of their RVs for a stretch at the junction. "Away from it all."

One of Clam Lake's six or seven buildings is the Texaco station on the north side of 77 heading east. The Texaco is part of Holter's Village Grocery. The Holter buildings form a cluster of cabin-like structures huddled together with entrances facing the highway. Part of this service complex is also a private club-bar where neighbors drop by now and then to see how Jerry Holter is coming along on his elaborate, animated wood carving of a scene from the old logging days. "My husband's a wood-a-holic," says Mrs. Holter. "Give him a piece of wood and he won't sleep till he's made something out of it." And Jerry always adds after she says this, "Keeps me off the streets of Clam Lake at night, anyway."

The United States Navy maintains a naval electronic engineering site eight miles down GG and then four miles farther off into the trees. The site is the test location for the navy's ELF project. ELF stands for extremely low frequency. Extremely low frequency radio signals penetrate sea water to a much greater depth than do higher frequency signals. On and off during the past twelve years, the navy has been experimenting with ELF signals at Clam Lake, testing their effects on life in the environment, sometimes trying to communicate with submarines deep in oceans around the earth—Clam Lake, Wisconsin, to the bottoms of the world.

Members of the Stop Sanguine/ELF Committee of Ashland have distributed cartoon postcards (above) in northern Wisconsin and urged citizens to send the cards to their Congressmen. Although the cartoon shows ELF painting missiles, the ELF project is not directly involved with missiles. Instead, it is a communication project from land to submerged submarines. Critics of the project, however, maintain the communication system can be used to instruct submarines to fire missiles possibly even as a first strike act. At right, a button distributed by a pro-ELF group.

For the past two years the ELF site has been closed down with only a maintenance crew at work, but some defense department people expect it to reopen for business very soon and eventually to become an important permanent fixture in the navy's global communication system. For the few people who live in this remote part of the North Woods, the incredible anomaly of highly sophisticated experimental electronic signals pulsing out of Clam Lake has been the source of dispute and confusion for the past twelve years.

Behind the counter at Holter's Grocery, Patricia Holter—Mrs. Jerry Holter—is a thin, middle aged, intense woman with a high, strong voice and abrupt motions that say firmly she allows no nonsense in her store. She wears thin gold-rimmed glasses. In February, Mrs. Holter wrote letters to the editors of all of the newspapers in the area. Her letters appeared in newspapers as far away as Superior. One letter read in part:

> We're Citizens for ELF. Because our United States Navy has been of honorable service to our country for more than 200 years, we want to do something for them. Let us explain.
>
> About 12 years ago the Navy built an Extremely Low Frequency (ELF) Communication Test Facility near Clam Lake, Wis. Prior to that time we often heard numerous accusations about all the so-called bad things the ELF Project would bring—great harm to our environment, the Navy will cut giant swaths through the forest, the project will ruin the resort industry, kill fish, it's not safe, it won't work, it will make us a nuclear target, and finally, it's not needed. Ten years of research and the construction and operation of the test facility have proven these statements are not true. However, there are some who still go about making such statements. . . .
>
> Ashland County will be conducting a public advisory referendum on the ELF Project. . . . Our citizens committee has

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only one mission. We want to see the citizens of this area get the facts on ELF. We are confident that if the voting public gets informed they will endorse what their county board has done and give the Navy a vote of confidence it so much deserves and needs. . . .

"Citizens for ELF meets every Monday morning at 10:00 a.m. over at the Namakagon Town Hall," says Mrs. Holter. "Maybe thirty or forty people come to meetings, depends on the weather. A lot of people don't like my working for ELF, though. I get pornography mail. Hate letters. I got this one the other day after they published my letters to the editors. This one's signed but a lot of them aren't."

The letter is typed. It is headed Hazelhurst, WI. "Dear Mrs. Holter: I read your letter in the Globe concerning ELF. Are you mad? ELF is not needed. . . . Asking for the Navy to build ELF in our backyard is like asking for cancer. . . . The Northwoods is a treasure. We must save it and protect it from dumb projects like ELF. . . ." After a closing "Sincerely," and the first name signature of the writer, there is a postscript, "PS: I hope they pin a good conduct medal on your ass!!!"

"I get threats, too," says Mrs. Holter. "I turned the threat over to the sheriff. They don't usually say what they're going to do—just lay off or else. It really bothers me, though, when el sickos out there send me the pornography. I don't know why it is, but most of the pornography comes from over around Green Bay. Sometimes the things they send me are so bad I send them over to the site for them to see."

The interior of Holter's Grocery is like a dim 7-11 prototype out of small towns gone—a shadowy deli case facing the door, a lighted cooler for milk and pop, a short counter with two facing stools, behind the counter an ice cream parlor console with wells for the chocolate and the strawberry and a red Coca-Cola dispenser in the middle. Mrs. Holter stands and talks beside a very large brown cash register right beside the front entrance.

"I got interested twelve years ago when it first started. I read everything I could find out about the project, both sides. Some of it I didn't understand and I'd get somebody to tell me what it meant. Then I got in their human health project; I wanted to find out what it was all about. There were so many reporters coming here asking me questions. . . . So I got three physical exams from the navy. Complete physicals. There's nothing wrong with me. A friend of mine told me if I had that kind of physical at Mayo's Clinic it would've cost me five thousand dollars. . . . There's nothing dangerous about that project. I believe that. It hasn't changed anything. Friend of mine who's lived here all his life and guided, of course he's in his eighties now and can't keep on doing that, but he says he hasn't seen anything change in these years except there's more young people around now with dogs."

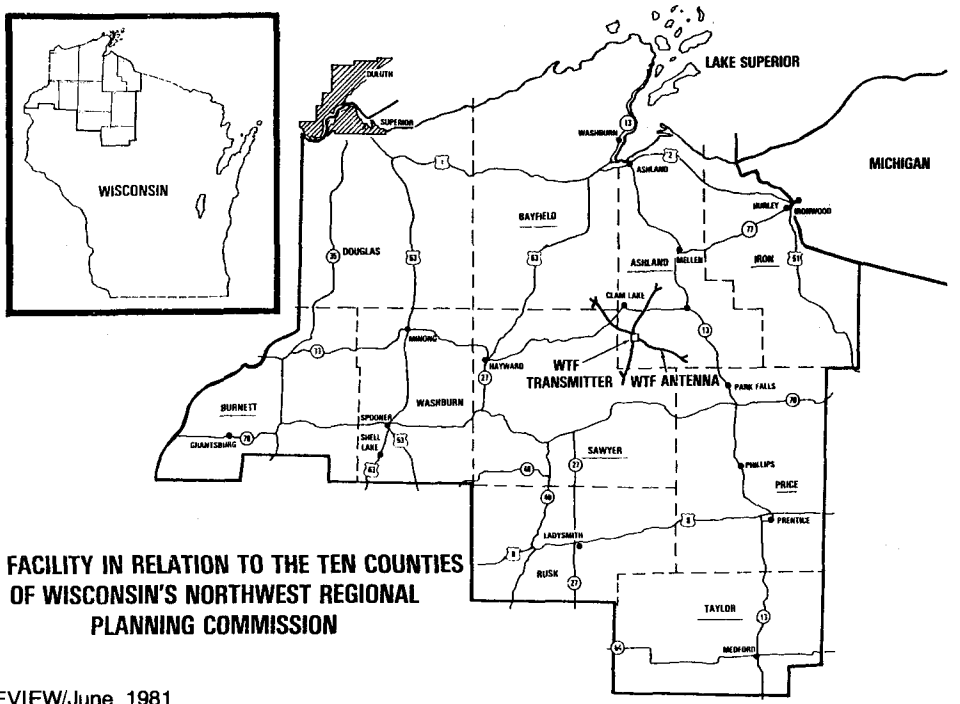
Mrs. Holter accepts applications for membership in Citizens for ELF. For one dollar she gives a four page pamphlet titled "Information on ELF Communications," a heavy green rectangular pin carrying the outline of a diving submarine and the words CITIZENS FOR ELF, and a carefully completed receipt.

Complete with navy diagrams and a photograph of the transmitter building, the pamphlet explains in simple reassuring language some of the complicated things that can go on down at the site. It is an expert public relations handout.

> Because of the special type of bedrock which lies under Northwestern Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula a shorter antenna using less power can be built here than anywhere else in the U.S. and still produce the necessary signal to reach the submarine patrol areas. . . .
>
> In 1976 the transmitter was given a message handling capability, and for the following two years sent simple test messages to submerged submarines as far away as the Mediterranean Sea and the Western Pacific. One dramatic example of its effectiveness is the receipt from Clam Lake of a message by a submarine operating under 30 feet of ice in the Arctic. . . .

Advocates of ELF call it the "most austere system that can do the job" of communicating with submerged U.S. submarines throughout most of the world's oceans. The experimental system at Clam Lake is a transmitter and 28 miles of transmission cable, some of the cable buried and some of it above ground. Arranged in a rough X pattern, these cable lines form a directional system that can beam signals in desired directions by manipulating current flow in the cross arms of the X.

In operation, the transmitter generator creates a flow of as much as 1.5 million watts of power along the cable to the ends of the X where the cable is grounded by metal rods deep into the earth. The current then travels far into the ground and returns to the other grounded end of the cable "bouncing radio waves through the earth into the rock below" as one description puts it. The signals radiate to the ionosphere where they are reflected around the earth, to filter through sea water to the listening submarines below. Engineers speak of the system as a large loop antenna in which the earth itself is a part of the loop.



ELF FACILITY IN RELATION TO THE TEN COUNTIES OF WISCONSIN'S NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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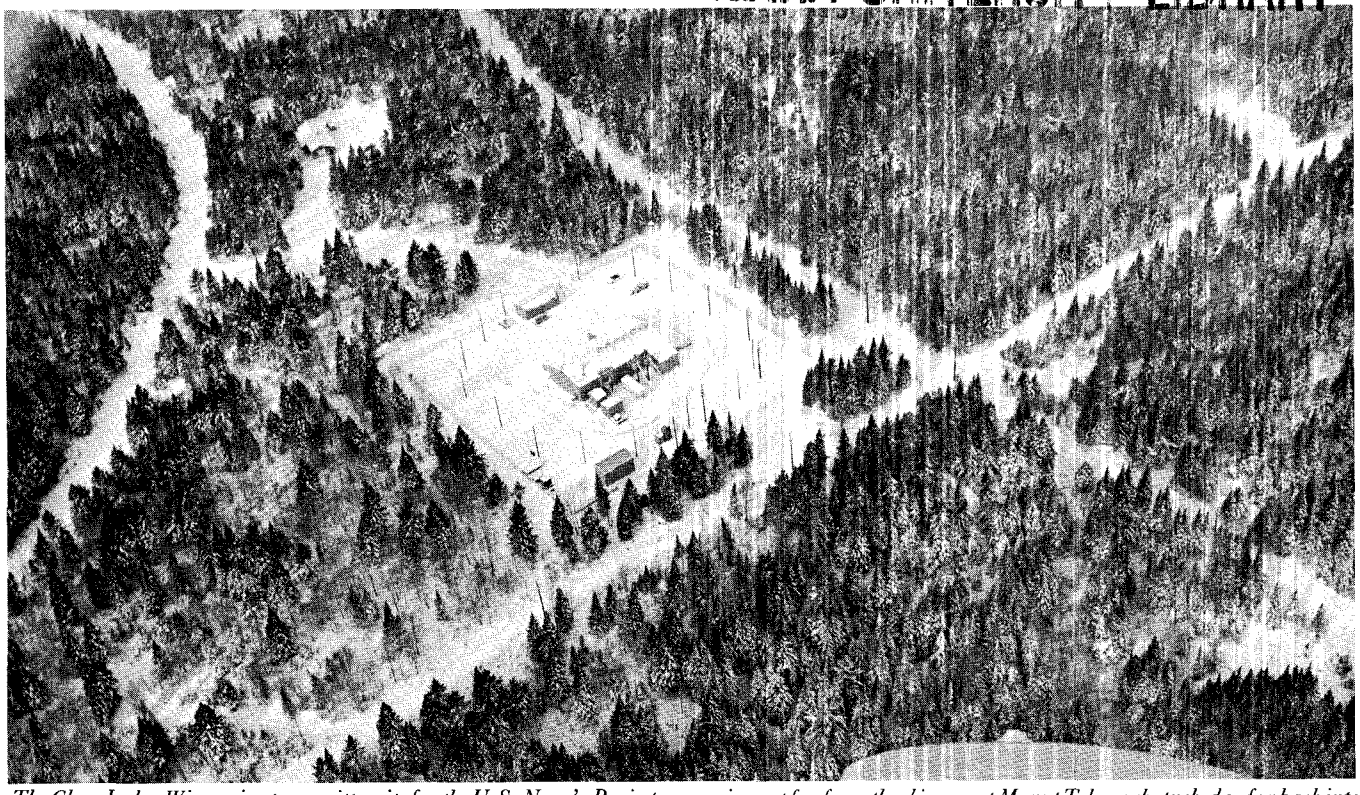

The Clam Lake, Wisconsin, transmitter site for the U.S. Navy's Project ELF. This site is about twenty miles east and south of Cable, Wisconsin, not far from the ski runs at Mount Telemark, tucked so far back into the Great North Woods it is a marvel to see (and to find).

Impulses sent from this loop are at the extreme low end of the electromagnetic spectrum, 72-80 cycles per second (72-80HZ). They have a very long wave length—2,500 miles—and unlike high frequency signals, they carry around the earth with very little loss of strength.

Although the navy has not released all details about the message handling capacity of the ELF system, technicians at Clam Lake say the messages are transmitted very slowly. The messages are brief, usually only three letters or symbols, and it takes from fifteen minutes to one hour to transmit one message, the time depending on the distance the message is to travel. The language used is a binary number system with a change in frequency from 72HZ to 80HZ to represent the two binary numbers 1 and 0. The Clam Lake transmitter can shift frequency from 72HZ to 80HZ sixteen times a second, thus allowing it to transmit sixteen bits of information per second. But because messages must be repeated many times, the system requires at least the fifteen minutes to transmit one three-character message. Simply, the system is a computer at Clam Lake talking very slowly in elementary computer language to a computer aboard a submarine. Some navy people have compared the three letter message from Clam Lake with the old fashioned flag hoist and signal book system—two or three signal flags for a message—that was used by the navy for years before the coming of the sophistication of radio communication. With this type of system with prearranged messages, a great deal of information can be communicated using a minimum of symbols. Navies of the past conducted entire wars using this sort of simple signal system.

Advocates of ELF speak of it as a protective measure for submarines; hearing ELF signals far below the surface of the ocean, submarines do not have to surface to receive messages. Some people see ELF as a significant deterrent to the two world struggle, a last-ditch message center for submaries carrying nuclear warheads in case an attack somehow rendered all other U.S. deterrent forces "inoperative." Still other people see ELF as a first strike weapon, a system designed to give the order for U.S. submarines to launch their missiles in an all-out surprise offensive. It may be that ELF is a bit of all of these things, but the navy publicly prefers to adopt the more general position about its function and its importance.

"We, the operators, the people who make the ships work and do our jobs, who know the threat because it threatens us, have seen the flexibility it (ELF) provides submarines and we, without qualification, state that it is necessary and that we can find no alternative to ELF to do this job," said Vice Admiral R.Y. Kaufman in 1980.

But unlike Admiral Kaufman and Mrs. Holter, opponents of ELF in Northern Wisconsin and elsewhere see it as a dangerous experiment that may threaten the life

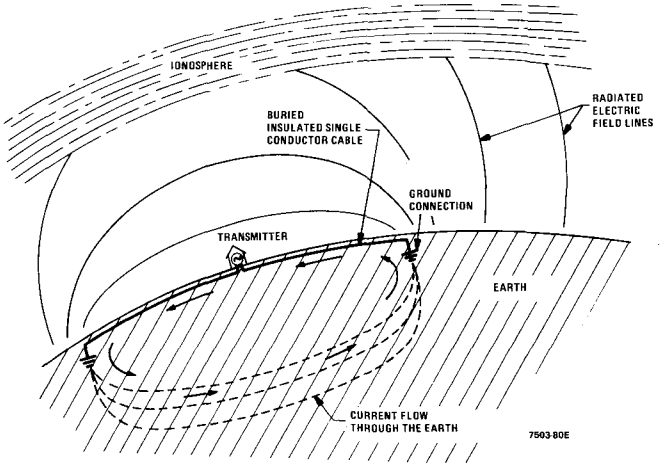

Diagram of ELF operation taken from the pamphlet "Information on ELF Communications" distributed by Citizens for ELF committee.

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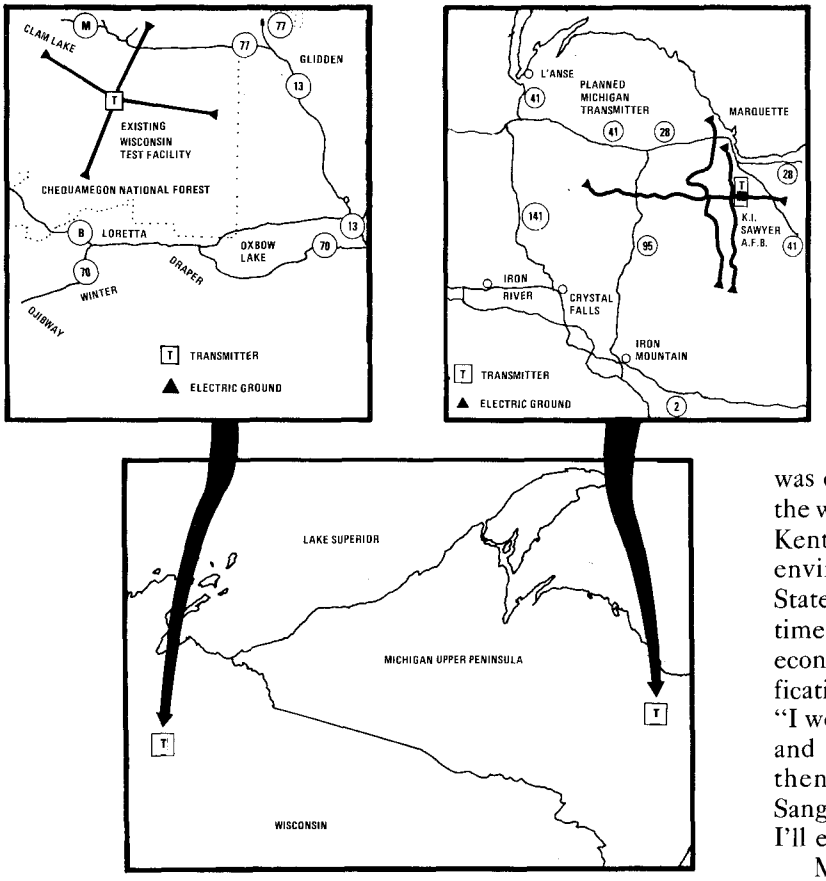
and well-being of all living things in the area. There is a vigorous Stop Project ELF organization with headquarters in Ashland. It is allied with a number of area environmental protection groups.

The twenty-eight miles of transmitter cable at Clam Lake are test installations. If the project ever goes beyond the testing phase, the plan (at least the plan publicly proposed by the navy at the present time) is to synchronize equipment at Clam Lake with a similar 130 mile system near K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base at Marquette, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. These two transmitting systems would then work together in low harmony as drawn in this navy diagram, the earth of Clam Lake, Wisconsin, and that of Upper Michigan pulsing in tandem with coded signals to submarines hidden in the far depths of the world's seas.



Fantastic as this arrangement may seem, it is modest when compared to the proposals that came before. The early plan for this communication system was called Sanguine and was described by one newspaper as a "huge radio transmitter underneath northern Wisconsin." Designed to be the world's largest transmitting antenna, it was to cover at least twenty-six Wisconsin counties. It would include about 6,000 miles of high voltage cables intersecting at six mile intervals with a transmitting site at each intersection. It would use 800 million watts of power, "more than enough to serve half the households in Wisconsin," said a Milwaukee *Journal* writer. Some maps outlining this early proposal show it including from one-third to nearly one-half of the entire land mass of Wisconsin—41% of the land mass of the state came to be the accepted estimate. Outstate observers laughingly referred to this bizarre proposal as "wiring Wisconsin" or "wiring Wisconsin for sound," but it was no joke to the concerned people who lived in the twenty-six counties. The plan presented enormous problems and possibly very great dangers. One report circulated in Ashland County in 1969 described the kinds of effects that might occur. "The Antenna will be enormous and, therefore, many people, domestic and farm animals, fish, insects, earthworms, birds, and indigenous plant life will all be exposed to its fields for very long periods of time, unless they are killed by it, are removed or, in the case of free-ranging animals, are driven out by the noxious effects." There was concern over induced current in fences, rain gutters, pipelines, railroad tracks, playground equipment. There was talk that hunters walking in the woods would be immobilized, stunned, perhaps killed by surges of current. There was concern over what effects the huge system would have on birds, fish, deer in the forests. The navy assured residents that it could "mitigate" these problems, but many residents were skeptical. Not a great deal of scientific information was available in those days on the effects of low frequency signals on living beings. There was a feeling among northland scientists that the navy had not done sufficient research on this subject before it made its plans.

Some citizens felt it was their patriotic duty to support Sanguine; it was needed by the navy. Some saw Sanguine as an economic boost to a traditionally poverty-prone area. Not only would Sanguine provide jobs for construction, they said, but it would be a grand tourist attraction after it was completed. "Visit northern Wisconsin and see the world's biggest antenna!" But other people, like Kent Shifferd of Ashland's Northland College and environmentalist Lowell Klessig, organized the State Committee to Stop Sanguine. It was a difficult time for them all—love of environment, patriotism, economic promise, each with its own kind of justification. "It put me in the hospital," said Shifferd. "I worked so hard—teaching classes in the daytime and coming home at night to change clothes and then driving somewhere to give a talk about Sanguine. I worked so hard I got sick. I don't think I'll ever try that kind of schedule again."

Much of the record of the struggle over Sanguine is included in a 1980 book by Klessig and Victor Strite, *The ELF Odyssey: National Security versus Environmental Protection*. The character of the Wisconsin people molded the controversy, say Klessig and Strite. Patriotism, economics, environment are the three central concerns of the people and these were the conflicting issues in the Sanguine struggle.

Sanguine was not built. By 1973 alternate plans began to appear, and some people who had supported Sanguine were furious at the defeat. The sylvan innocence of the state and its people seemed particularly galling. "Unfortunately, the 1969 Sanguine proposals, poorly presented to the public behind a typical mixed Pentagon front of ineffective secrecy and fumbling public relations, fell square in the path of the ecology hurricane that lashed the country end to end, but nowhere fiercer than in antimilitary, nature-loving, pastoral, progressive Wisconsin," wrote Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr. in a syndicated story for newspapers in 1973. "Seizing on this mood both of

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time and locale, those who (in secretary Schlesinger's recent remarks), want to 'dismantle the defense establishment of the United States' generated a misinformed uproar that Sanguine's electronic emissions would stop the trees from growing, fry the grass, keep the hens from laying, spoil the hunting, sour the beer, curdle the cheese and draw a lot of government strangers into unspoiled Wisconsin."

In 1973 and 1974 there was talk of moving this whole communication undertaking to the Southwest, but that was abandoned in 1975 when the concept was scaled down and renamed Seafarer and the talk was that it might run from Michigan. But that plan also met serious difficulties including opposition from Michigan citizens. In 1978 the present ELF plan was brought forth as the "most austere system that can do the job."

Down GG, at the test site itself, the one-and-a-half story T-shaped metal warehouse that contains nearly all of the ELF transmission equipment sits in the middle of a smooth rectangular plot of land, a hundred yards or so on a side, that has been cut out of the forest growth. A heavy metal link fence squares the plot. Although early descriptions of the site mentioned dogs and armed patrols, there are no dogs and no patrols now. Instead, on this early spring day, Ole, a square man with heavy sideburns wearing a plaid shirt and jeans, opens the gate. Ole does not smile a great deal.

Inside the warehouse, Stanley Kasieta is the Director. He says he has been at the Clam Lake site since its beginning twelve years ago. "Ironwood's my home. Ironwood, Michigan," Stanley says. "I'm a native around here." His greying hair recedes from high sloping temples. The hair is cut short and neat and curls in back and at the sides where it joins his silver, greying beard. He wears gold rimmed glasses. Unlike most natives around Clam Lake who wear boots and rubber packs against the mud and the melting snow this time of year, Stanley wears scuffed black loafers. He doesn't appear to be much of an outdoor man, yet there might be a toughness here; not everything is immediately apparent. He has a very heavy belly pressing out against a loose tan sport shirt. He smokes cigarettes nervously, flicking ashes while he talks.

"I'm an EE," Stanley says. "My degree's from U. of Saint Mary's in San Antonio. We've got nothing to hide here. Glad to have people come and look around; it gets kind of boring doing nothing around here. We've been closed down now for about two years. We're just housekeeping. Only six of us work here now. If we go operational again that'll go to around twenty-two. I work for GTE-Sylvania. They run the site for the navy."

Stanley is confident, aloof, professionally friendly. His sentences sometimes sound as if they had been written or practiced in advance; maybe he has just answered the same questions too many times. Part of his job right now appears to be public relations, but the artificial warmth that might make good relations stick is not much present. The visitor at the site does not feel welcome so much as put up with. Yet Stanley smiles a lot and answers most questions with a laugh that suggests he and the questioner are in on the knowledge of how foolish the whole game is. "Guard dogs? They used to say that. The fact is that some fellow down here had this old hound came to work with him. People thought it was a guard dog. . . . Armed patrols? They used to have guns, but some fellow shot himself in the foot so we took the guns away from them. . . . Yes, I've met Craig Kronstedt. Some people say he's tried everything, tried everything. . . ."

Stanley sits and talks beside a Panasonic video cassette player in a utility room. There are work counters and drawers, packing boxes, the kind of functional work room that might be used to repair small electric appliances, but the surfaces are mostly clean of gear now. On a shelf opposite the entrance door, a television monitor screen shows a constant picture of the front gate. The only motion on the screen is the gentle change of shadow patterns as the wind moves the trees beside the road.

The Stop Project ELF people have recently charged that transmissions from the site might have triggered the great July 4, 1977, storm that swept through this section of Wisconsin and caused extensive damage. Stop ELF has asked for an investigation into the possible relationship between low frequency radio signals and the forces that drive storms. Dr. Craig Kronstedt, a scientist who lives twenty miles or so north of the site off the highway to Ashland, is one of the leaders of Stop ELF.

Stanley says he doesn't believe a word of the storm story. "I'll tell you what I think about those people. Those people are anti-everything. They're anti-military, anti-nuclear power, they're for unilateral disarmament. Yes, I suppose they're environmentalists too but that's not so important. Right now, they just want print. That's why they thought up that story about the storm. Sure, they've caused us some heat, lots of heat sometimes. I don't trust them. That one lied to me. He came down here with that girl. What was that girl's name, Ole? Ole doesn't remember, I guess. Anyway, they came down here a while back and said they wanted to look at the log for July, 1977. So I gave it to them to look at. They said they wanted to check up on some television interference that month, said they wanted to see if we were transmitting when the interference happened. There wasn't any television interference. That's when they got that stuff about the storm. It's a lot of baloney. They didn't even read the log right when they looked at it. They didn't even understand that the log is in zulu time, Greenwich time, and they thought it was in local time so their times are all wrong.

"I don't think there's any hazards with this project. I've been here twelve years and I never felt better. Sure, people say there's hazards, like that article in *Reader's Digest* about electronic smog. I think Melvin Laird had that article put there. He's some big shot at *Reader's Digest*. That article's full of baloney.

"I haven't seen any flocks of lost birds flying around the transmitter. I don't know about tadpoles and worms. I haven't seen any worms in the woods. Take a look at the environmental reports. They're in all the libraries."

Stanley would rather show tapes on his Panasonic than talk. He puts a tape titled ELF COMMUNICATIONS into the machine. It is a colorful, fifteen minute public relations presentation, expertly done, "made only a few months ago," Stanley says, showing in simple scenes and diagrams how ELF signals penetrate seawater. He puts another cassette into the machine. It is Vice Admiral Joe Williams talking to the camera, telling it that when a submarine surfaces to receive conventional radio messages, it must extend a long, trailing antenna for reception. Sometimes, he says, as many as fifty or sixty seagulls light on the trailing antenna for a free ride and

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rest. You can imagine the visibility of a submarine pulling sixty white seagulls along behind, he says.

Across the hall from the utility room, Stanley shows off the transmitter console, six metal panels curved around a chair for the operator, a teletype machine beside. Stanley touches the teletype, the digital timing device. "This one's expensive, came from Switzerland. This one's a cheapy. Here's the mini-computer." There is a fondness in his touch. He likes the gadgets better than the visitors. "If we were operational, there'd be two teletype machines here. Messages would come over one that would be here. They'd come in from Norfolk, Virginia. They'd be in code. We wouldn't know what they'd say. Then we'd type them on this teletype and put 'em into our system. . . ."

On a filing cabinet beside the door is a small display: First ELF Message from Clam Lake to a submarine. 26 July 1976 to the USS Stonewall Jackson. Message: UNIFORM SIERRA NOVEMBER Took 896 seconds for the Stonewall Jackson's computer to decode. Perhaps the display is misleading. Stanley admits that the message was just USN.

In operation, the ELF transmitter pumps as much as 1.5 million watts of electric power into the transmitting cable, into the earth. Down the hallway into the cross bar of the warehouse T, Stanley looks at the power. Rows of metal boxes higher than his head with heavy set handles, little schematic diagrams on the green-gray doors; insulated cables as big as a man's wrist leading through a hole near the roof to the lines outside. In the ceiling is a series of ventilator fans. "It gets pretty hot in here sometimes," Stanley says.

"Drop by Holter's Grocery on your way back to town," Stanley says. "Take a look at Jerry Holter's animated wood carving of the old logger days."

"Be careful on your way back up to 77," Ole says. "I saw a lot of deer out on GG when I came to work this morning."

Klessig and Strite in their ELF book claim that the navy has come to realize the public relations potential of the Clam Lake site, that the site crew works to retain the feel of nature unmolested in the area. They say that the site crew uses buckets of bird seed to lure birds to the area, salt blocks to attract deer, sometimes ropes to hold up trees where the forest was scarred by the installation. When visitors are at the site, say Klessig and Strite, an employee reports that he has just seen a number of deer out under one of the antenna. . . .

Opposition to the ELF project is strong in Ashland County and neighboring areas. Nearly everything about the project generates controversy. For every claim there is a counter-claim, then an answer, then an objection. Some people say that continued studies are needed to determine long range effects on the environment from these transmissions. Some people believe that ELF is only a kind of decoy, that the navy's real plan is to return to the huge Sanguine plan after the opposition dissipates. Some people are frankly afraid of the consequences of prolonged exposure to low frequency waves—what might they do to the human brain? There is talk of the low frequency waves being similar to the electric system in the human nerve network and brain.

An organization called NORTHERN ALLIANCE over at Springbrook distributes a mimeographed sheet headed AN E.L.F. IN THE WOODS. "Forty-six different research studies have found harmful biological effects from ELF exposure," the sheet quotes Dr. Kronstedt. "Effects range from altered growth, altered physiology, altered behavior, and in a few experiments, death to the organism. . . . An ELF wave of 74HZ has a wavelength of approximately 2,500 miles and thus will form ten complete waves as it travels around the earth. Since these waves will meet each other as they travel . . . they will aid one another and the waves will appear to stand still. These standing waves . . . have their highest energy levels at frequencies of 7HZ, 14HZ, 20HZ, 25HZ and 32HZ, which is precisely the range of ELF frequencies we find in the human brain. . . ."

"I'm worried about the low frequency," said Sandy Barrus of the Northern Alliance. "It may dull our brains, interfere with our work. We don't know what it will do to the children."

The Stop ELF people in Ashland provide protest postcards to the public; send one to a friend. The postcards carry a drawing in red of a Christmas-like elf sitting on a stool painting stripes on a little missile. Four completed missiles wait on a nearby shelf. The caption reads, STOP ELF.

A group distributes sample letters for residents to copy or sign and send on to their congressman. CONGRESSMAN OBEY: I STRONGLY OPPOSE PROJECT E.L.F. BEING BUILT ANYWHERE AND CALL FOR THE DISMANTLING AND REMOVAL OF THE E.L.F. TEST FACILITY IN NORTHERN WISCONSIN ON THE GROUNDS THAT: IT MAY CAUSE CHANGES IN THE BRAIN, HEART RATE, BLOOD PRESSURE, BONE TUMORS, STRESS, WEIGHT GAIN AND ALTERED GROWTH. . . .

STOP Project ELF distributes a seven page mimeographed pamphlet titled "An Introduction to Project ELF." Part of that pamphlet is devoted to the question, "How is ELF Harmful?"

> *Human Health:* In assessing the potential health hazards of exposure to ELF radiation, one point is especially important: the electromagnetic field given off by Project ELF is unique. . . . Most of the research that has been done into the effects of ELF is secret and unavailable to the public. . . . Much of the ELF research that is available is damning. Forty-six studies have found harmful biological effects from ELF exposure. These effects include bone tumors, stress, altered growth, weight gain, changes in the brain, heart rate and blood pressure, sexual sterility, and in some experiments death.
>
> Our brains and central nervous systems are especially affected by ELF radiation because they function electromagnetically in the ELF range. According to the Navy's own studies, a 20% change in the brain chemistry of cats occurred after exposure to ELF. The Navy has also reported that monkeys exposed to ELF have experienced time distortion. What the Navy failed to report, in an apparent cover-up of information, is that after just 4 hours of exposure to ELF waves, the monkeys' brain waves had 'locked' with the ELF waves in phase and frequency. Even after the ELF radiation had been stopped, the monkeys continued to produce the waves that had been imposed upon their brains.
>
> *ELF Disrupts Bird Migration.* Studies by both the Navy and independent researchers have demonstrated that ELF disrupts the migratory patterns of birds.

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Much, though not all, of the recent technical objections to ELF, especially those objections relating to brain waves, have come from Dr. Craig Kronstedt, who is Research Director for Stop ELF. Kronstedt has become a controversial figure in the North Woods. He is thirty-eight years old, a veteran of 7½ years in the navy, some of that time aboard submarines. He attended navy electrical schools and a navy nuclear power school. He has a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He did graduate research in psychobiology, particularly in electrical aspects of the nervous system, developing electromagnetic models of different brain functions. He came to Ashland in 1977 and became interested in the Stop ELF movement shortly after his arrival. He says he first learned of the movement from members of the food co-op he and his wife joined right after they arrived. Around Ashland and Hayward there are many young people living in the woods, people who've come north to find a simpler life style. These people have formed co-ops and food buying and barter clubs and the clubs serve informally as information centers. Many co-op members are strongly opposed to ELF. They identify it with a technology that they think is dangerous. "I live eleven miles from it, and I'm afraid of the thing," says Joshua Mark, who lives in the woods outside Grand View. Mark and some friends have built an ark-like house in the forest. They read Gandhi and talk about a peaceful world. Mark is planning on opening a natural food bakery in Washburn soon. "We live in a very selfish country," Mark says. "Our technology has outstripped our morality . . . . Doctor Kronstedt says he wants to get a van and park it outside the entrance to the ELF site and test people's reaction time while the transmitter's working. He knows how to do that. But he'd need a grant to get the equipment. Who'd give him a grant for that?" Supporters of ELF say that people like Mark and his friends lack the proper patriotism.

Kronstedt and his wife live in a small farmhouse located off the highway between Ashland and Clam Lake. He has recently been laid off from his job as county chemical dependency counsellor. People in the region think there may be a relationship between his loss of employment and his anti-ELF activities. He says, well, a lot of people objected to me talking to children in the schools, and that was part of my job. People think I'm a radical. But I'm not bitter. He quotes Eric Fromm.

Kronstedt is a trim, very straight, compact man with a dark complexion. He looks much younger than his age. He has a little mustache and a little beard, black hair cut uncertainly so that it shags a bit over his ears and turns up unevenly around the back of his neck. He has a soft voice and smiles warmly as he looks directly at you when he talks.

"My wife and I are vegetarians. We live in an old two-room farmhouse. It has an old fashioned hand pump right in the kitchen. Semi solar. We live very very simply, 'voluntary simplicity' I call it. Even though I don't have an income now, we'll hold out quite a while. Our needs are very small. We raise a lot of our own food. Working against ELF is interesting and it's the morally correct thing to do. I'll keep doing it as long as I can. A strong America is not necessarily where it's at any more. The John Wayne image has to disappear. Spending money on armament and armament projects when people are hungry is wrong. I'm a veteran, but I'm opposed to war. . . I'm interested in the electrical aspects of the nervous system. The brain works with those same low frequencies that ELF uses. We have got to do more study before we can understand just how these electrical systems can affect each other, what ELF can do to human brains. No one really knows the answer to that question right now. . . . Oh sure, I know some people think I'm radical, but there's a lot of young people around here who came up north and moved into these woods to get away from the way things are other places. Those people stand by me. Remember, we must always be watchful of the government."

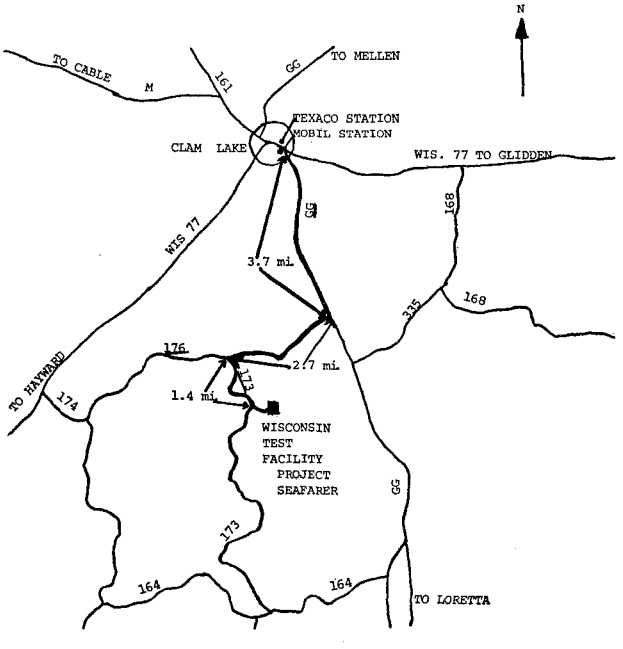
Since 1968 the navy has sponsored research into the biological and ecological effects of the ELF system. The *Proceedings of the IEEE*, an engineering journal, in January 1980 printed a summary of that research written by James D. Grissett, who is associated with the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory in Pensacola. Except for one area, Grissett's summary finds no harmful effects from ELF. The summary includes references to experiments on fish, insects, birds, plants, soil organisms, primates, and other more elusive subjects. Only the primates experiment produced a question.

According to Grissett's summary, thirty rhesus monkeys were exposed to ELF signals for 22 hours a day for more than three years. Thirty rhesus monkeys were used as a control group. The results of the experiment are curious. The exposed males showed a significantly enhanced growth rate. They grew at a 10% greater rate than the unexposed males. The cause and the later meaning of the growth are not known and not understood. "One plausible hypothesis is that the testes are in contact with

NAVAL ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING OFFICE

Clam Lake, Wisconsin 54517

Phone 715-794-2151



There is no secret about the ELF test site location. Anyone driving through Clam Lake, Wisconsin, can pick up one of these maps at either the Mobil station or the Holter Texaco station on highway 77.

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the cage bars generating the electric field and were thus directly stimulated to increase the secretion of testosterone," said Grissett's summary. But no one knows for certain. Additional monkeys are being tested.

ELF opponents reject much of the evidence on which Grissett's summary was based. They say some scientists who looked at the data and the experiments and who came to the reassuring conclusions that Grissett presents, were being paid by private power companies at the time to testify at hearings that ELF signals are safe.

In a Discussion section at the end of his report, Grissett raises questions that flow directly from Clam Lake and ELF but go far beyond to worry citizens everywhere these days.

> . . . conflicting viewpoints among citizens has made it extremely difficult for decision makers to assess the environmental impact of the ELF communications system or for new technology in general. Public hearings quickly become an adversary proceeding. The debates obviously involve both scientific and socioeconomic factors. Unlike courts of law where basic principles regarding presumptions of innocence, burdens of proof, and rules of evidence are well established, society has not developed a philosophical framework and the systematic procedures for resolving risk versus benefit questions regarding the impact of technology.

When Mrs. Holter wrote her Letters to the Editor, she was preparing for the Ashland County referendum on ELF that would be held on April 7. It was just before her letters in support of ELF that John Stauber and Craig Kronstedt charged at the state capitol in Madison that ELF might have caused the huge storm that devastated parts of the state in 1977. And a while after the charges the Northern Alliance from down at Springbrook decided to hold a public debate in Hayward on the whole ELF controversy.

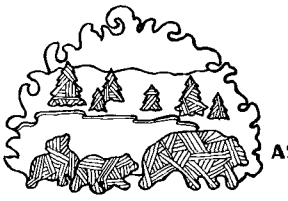
Perhaps it was only accidental that the Ashland County advisory referendum on ELF was less than two months away, but in mid-February John C. Stauber, chief spokesman for the Stop ELF movement, and Craig Kronstedt held a news conference at the state capitol in Madison. They charged that ELF signals may have caused the great storm that swept through northern Wisconsin on July 4, 1977. "The navy's ELF system may have inadvertently triggered a weather bomb," Stauber said. "An inspection of the facility's operating logs shows a direct correlation between the time the transmission went on at full power and the intensity of the storm." Kronstedt told reporters, "The pulsating field of the ELF antenna signal could create and modulate the ions in a cloud, alternately attracting and repelling them. If enough ionization occurred an avalanche of ions could trigger a downburst." Both Stauber and Kronstedt said their weather information was based on studies done by a University of Chicago professor, T. Theodore Fujita who mapped the storm characteristics afterwards. Fujita classified the storm as a "downburst." Downbursts are "tremendous energy dynamos that propel masses of air on a giant atmospheric roller coaster from near the ground to miles above the surface, then back down," explained a university meteorologist. Stauber and Kronstedt did not suggest that Fujita agreed that ELF could have been responsible for the storm.

These accusations attracted attention. In northern Wisconsin people still remember the great Fourth of July storm. It was an awesome event. At the time, it was described as a series of afternoon tornadoes that swept a ten mile wide path about 170 miles long from the western end of the state through Sawyer and Ashland Counties all the way to Oneida County in the east. The storm passed only a few miles south of the Clam Lake transmitter. It leveled trees and destroyed buildings. A child was killed when a tree fell on the family camper at Conners Lake Campground. Almost every building in Phillips was damaged. Roads were blocked and electric power was interrupted. Eventually, national guardsmen were called to aid in the cleanup. In Sawyer County, damage along roads in forested areas was so extensive each of the Sawyer County sheriff squads was assigned a chain saw and officers reported moving along county roads five feet, cutting, moving five feet, cutting, moving five feet.

Other ecology-minded groups joined Stop ELF in linking the Clam Lake transmitter to the great storm. The February *ECO Bulletin,* publication of a Madison-based group called Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, carried a long description of ELF and what it called the "downburst connection." Obviously relying on some of Stop ELF's material, the *Bulletin* detailed the connection. "The downburst had several unusual characteristics. It was not steady, but rather pulsated as it moved along its 166 mile swath, hitting and then releasing, hitting and releasing as many as 25 times. Even more unusual is that the storm swung in an almost semi-circular path around the Navy's ELF antenna. . . . An inspection of the Navy's log of July 4, 1977, revealed that they were transmitting on the north-south leg of the antenna from early morning until about 1:00 P.M. when both legs were put into operation. It was about that time the storm developed its killer downburst characteristics. The antennas were phased so that the signal was beamed in a northwest to southeast direction. As the storm swept down under the southeast beam of the ELF antenna, the storm increased in intensity, with the largest number of downbursts occurring directly southeast of the Clam Lake site. . . . There appears to be a strong case for a relationship between downburst storms and ELF. . . . This kind of circumstantial evidence does not prove that ELF causes storms, but it does suggest that ELF may have the capacity to attract and intensify already present storm systems."

PROJECT E.L.F. IN THE NORTHLAND?

A DEBATE IS BEING HELD THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1981 AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE SAWYER COUNTY COURT HOUSE. BETWEEN DR. CRAIG KRONSTEDT AND MR. HARRY THIBEDEAU.



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Northern Alliance

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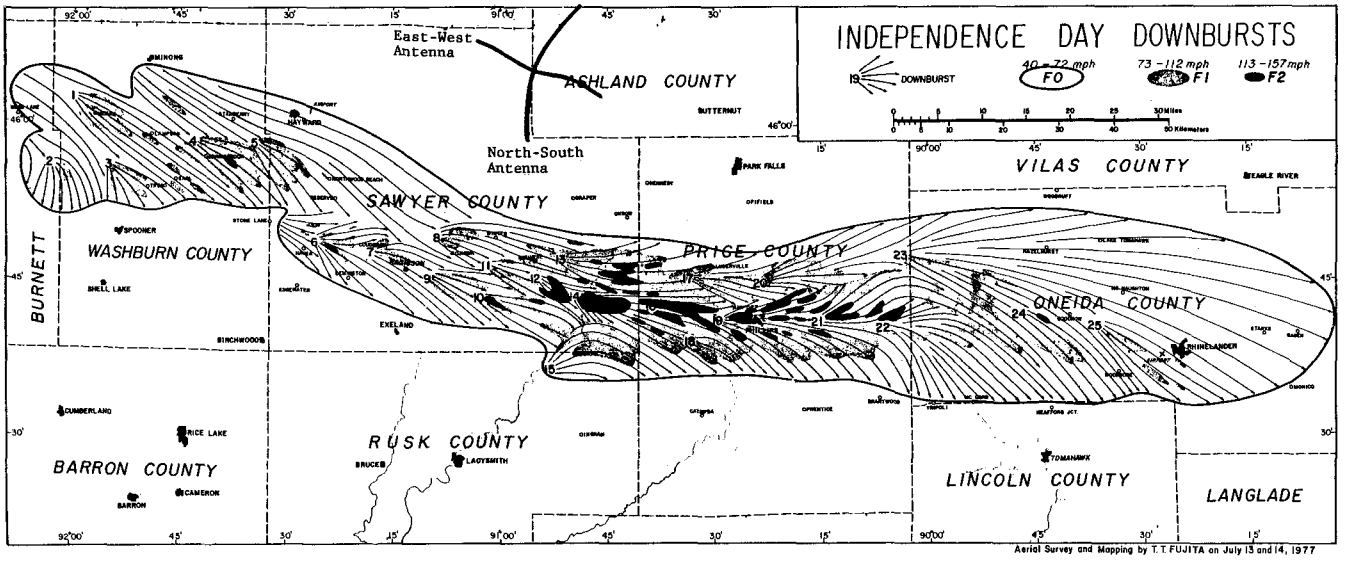
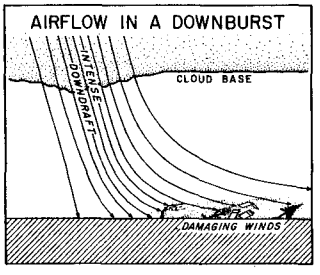
Most scientists down in Madison who commented on the storm charges seemed to treat them as foolishness. ". . . a lot of hogwash," said a professor in the university's electrical engineering department. "That little feeble Clam Lake antenna being able to couple any energy into the atmosphere is impossible." The Milwaukee *Journal* told its readers that although the Stop ELF people were claiming that the Clam Lake transmitter was pumping 1.2 million watts of power into the ground just before the storm, what they didn't add was that the total output power of that antenna was less than one watt—about the same amount of power it takes to light a flashlight bulb. The *Journal* quoted Professor Fujita as agreeing that the output of energy in a storm like this one was so great that nothing man could do would be of effect. One old Sanguine foe in Ashland joined the scientists, "I think I was using the toilet when the storm came over. Maybe I caused the trouble."

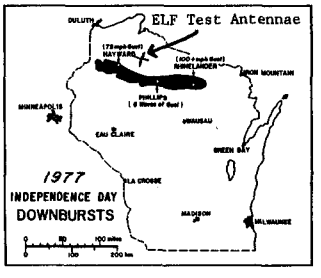
But Stop ELF found support on the storm issue from some university scientists in the eastern part of the nation, one quoted as saying that the question was worth investigating. And Stop ELF received more support from Northern Thunder, a co-op in Eau Claire. The March issue of Northern Thunder's *Hard Rain,* a publication centering on environmental questions, included a series of quotations from John Stauber. "It is impossible to deny the direct correlation that exists between the devastating July 4, 1977 storm and the transmissions from the nearby ELF Test Facility. . . we are calling for an investigation into the effects of ELF transmissions on weather and storms. We must obtain the records of the ELF Test Facility's past operation, and begin an examination for possible environmental effects. . . . For the past decade northern Wisconsin residents have been guinea pigs in unknown experiments. Since 1969 the Navy has operated in secret its ELF Test Facility near Clam Lake, Wisconsin. The public does not know what tests were conducted, when, and what the effects of these tests might be. We do know that extremely low frequency electromagnetic radiation has been shown to cause such symptoms as altered growth, stress, and changes in the brain. Now there is a suspicion of ELF interfering with weather. We need to know what has been going on at Clam Lake. Therefore, we have filed a formal request with the Navy under the Freedom of Information Act to receive all records which are pertinent to the day-to-day operations of the ELF Test Facility there."

Meanwhile, the Northern Alliance in Springbrook was organizing its debate. Like Mrs. Holter's Letters to the Editor, the press releases from Sue Espersen announcing the debate were sent to all of the newspapers in the area—Ashland, Glidden, Park Falls, Spooner, Washburn, Rice Lake. Not only did the release announce that the debate would be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Sawyer County Courthouse in Hayward, it also tipped off the careful reader to the sentiments of the Northern Alliance about the question and the debaters.

> There has been much controversy over Project E.L.F. . . . There is much debate over its effectiveness, its capabilities, and its costs. Other questions have been raised about its effects on human brain functions, the environment, and weather. On February 13th, a group of concerned citizens sent a layman's report to scientists and meteorologists around the country asking them to look into the possibility of Project E.L.F. drawing in and intensifying the downburst storm of July 4, 1977. . . .
>
> The debate will be between Dr. Craig Kronstedt and Mr. Harry Thibedeau and is open to the public. . . . Dr. Kronstedt spent 5 years in the Navy as a communications and nuclear reactor specialist aboard submarines. He has a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology and experimental psychobiology. He has studied the effects of electromagnetism on human health







A map of the July 4, 1977, downburst that caused great damage in northern Wisconsin. Opponents of the ELF project say there may be a connection between the behavior of the storm and low frequency radio transmissions from the Clam Lake ELF site. Professor T. Theodore Fujita, a meteorologist at the University of Chicago and the person who drew this map, has been quoted as saying that the ELF transmissions could not have influenced the storm. Nevertheless, Stop ELF members are demanding an investigation. This version of the map with the ELF antenna added in the upper portion was distributed by a Stop ELF group.

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and behavior and wrote his doctoral thesis on electromagnetic aspects of brain function. He opposes E.L.F. Mr. Thibedeau is a high [school] graduate and a radio announcer at W.R.L.S. in Hayward, and is a proponent of E.L.F.

The Sawyer County Courthouse in Hayward is a new one-story rock, glass and cedar structure set on a full square block just a short distance from the business district. The debate took place in the Circuit Court Room, a functional place with 12 white plastic seats up front for the jurors when trials are in progress, benches for viewers, tables up front for attorneys and clients, a place for the judge, an American flag. At the back of the room by the entrance, Sue Espersen and other Northern Alliance people distributed Stop ELF postcards, sample letters of protest to congressmen, literature on environmental issues.

By 6:55 p.m. the benches and plastic seats were filled, perhaps one-hundred people in the room. Folding chairs were placed in the center aisle, then in the two side aisles. People filled the chairs and more people waited quietly in the entrance, wanting to get in. This was a North Country audience—young women in jeans and blue quilted jackets with babies strapped to their backs, Indians from the reservation with deep black hair and high cheekbones. Ole was there with some friends wearing his green CITIZENS FOR ELF button. There were many young faces, people from the woods coming to express their support for Kronstedt. There were solid, round, weathered faces of the oldtimers, heavy wool jackets, many wearing green buttons. The crowd was quiet, people mostly talking in near whispers. Maybe the courtroom setting induced restraint; maybe the different kinds of viewers didn't mix very well.

Shortly after 7:00 p.m. the debate began with the introduction of Harry Thibedeau. Thibedeau is a lifelong resident of the North, a graduate of the local high school, and a man active in political and social life in the area. He is a radio announcer with a local station.

Thibedeau is a very heavy man, full belly, large jowls, in his mid-twenties. He wore a neat, shiny black suit with the coat unbuttoned. He had a tiny mustache. With his left hand casually in his coat pocket he was confident, relaxed, authoritative. He wore a green CITIZENS FOR ELF button.

Thibedeau spoke smoothly with no hesitation. He told the group he was not connected with the navy or the project. He asked questions and then answered them. Is ELF needed? No one in this room can answer that. . . . How important are those submarines as nuclear deterrents? I don't know and you don't know. . . . But the people who *do* know say we need this system.

Thibedeau's message was simple. These ELF matters are complicated, beyond the scope of us here tonight. Trust the Navy. Trust the experts. He tapped the lectern sharply with his finger for emphasis. He repeated key phrases in a kind of chant, "years down the road . . . years down the road . . ." He talked to the audience as if it were composed of children. Trust the authorities, he told them. When he sat down there was no applause.

Craig Kronstedt rose to speak. I don't suggest you take the word of other experts, he said. But his meaning was that everyone knew that Thibedeau was no expert. (Thibedeau is not widely liked by the people from the co-ops and the woods and they sometimes refer to him as "that disc jockey.") There was some appreciative laughter, mostly from the young people in the audience.

Kronstedt talked about ELF transmissions and brain waves. Like thunderstorms, he said, the human brain generates extremely low frequency waves. The human system is an ELF system. . . . Numerous experiments have shown that when a person or animal is exposed to ELF, unusual things begin to happen. . . . Whether or not those effects are hazardous is a debatable question. But it needs further study. . . Kronstedt began to wander in his presentation. Adolph Hitler could experiment with people, but the U.S. government should not do that. Kronstedt talked about submarine strategy, the number of fuses burned at the Clam Lake site, alternative communication possibilities, the 1977 storm. He held up a colored 2 × 4 poster of the path of the storm showing its swing around the Clam Lake site. He sat down. There was no applause.

Thibedeau spoke in rebuttal. This system poses no environmental threat, he said. That's a lot of hogwash about the storm.

Kronstedt spoke in rebuttal. At least 50% of what you hear here tonight is baloney, he said. He suggested that ELF signals might cause male impotence.

The debate was over. It was strangely spiritless and directionless. Nothing was any clearer than it had been before the debate. "Thibedeau didn't have anything to say and Kronstedt used his material badly," said one of the co-op people from north of Hayward.

Not long after the debate, voters of Ashland County cast their opinions on ELF in the advisory referendum. With more than 5,000 ballots cast, the pro-ELF side received a handful of votes more than the anti-ELF side. Results were too close to have much meaning.

As spring comes around, tourists are beginning to return from the south to get away from it all again. Representative Obey has called for the dismantlement of the ELF site in view of the fact that some navy officials now say that the system doesn't work. But that opinion came from the navy shortly before the referendum vote, and some people think the navy just said that the system won't work so as to lull opponents into a false sense of relief. "Nothing is so discouraging as premature victory," says Lowell Klessig.

News stories now report that the navy is thinking about building a mobile ELF unit, "As part of the mobile ELF system, trucks carrying communication equipment would be hidden in caves, and following a nuclear attack the equipment would be used to lay necessary antenna wires and set up transmitters."

Down at the Clam Lake site, activity is picking up. "This system is going to go," says Stanley Kasieta. "It's the only way. Why, they talk about using lasers instead of ELF. As soon as a laser kills one bird those environmental people will be all over the lasers so fast they won't know what's happening. . . ."

Mrs. Holter has persuaded Jerry to take the animated logging scene out of the bar and put it in a cabin a few yards down the road. The animated scene includes little steel bars that vibrate to provide a low level musical background to the action. "That noise over and over was driving me crazy," said Mrs. Holter. "It was like a Chinese torture." □

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MOLLY GILES

PIE DANCE

I don't know what to do about my husband's new wife. She won't come in. She sits on the front porch and smokes. She won't knock or ring the bell, and the only way I know she's there at all is because the dog points in the living room. The minute I see Stray standing with one paw up and his tail straight out I say, "Shhh. It's Pauline." I stroke his coarse fur, and lean on the broom, and we wait. We hear the creak of a board, the click of a purse, a cigarette being lit, a sad, tiny cough. At last I give up and open the door. "Pauline?" The afternoon light hurts my eyes. "Would you like to come in?"

"No," says Pauline.

Sometimes she sits on the stoop, picking at the paint, and sometimes she sits on the edge of an empty planter box. Today she's perched on the railing. She frowns when she sees me and lifts her small chin. She wears the same black velvet jacket she always wears, the same formal silk blouse, the same huge dark glasses. "Just passing by," she explains.

I nod. Pauline lives thirty miles to the east, in the city, with Konrad. "Passing by" would take her one toll bridge, one freeway, and two back country roads from their flat. But lies are the least of our problems, Pauline's and mine, so I nod again, bunch my bathrobe a little tighter around my waist, try to cover one bare foot with the other, and repeat my request. She shakes her head so vigorously the railing lurches. "Konrad," she says, in her high young voice, "expects me. You know how he is."

I do, or I did—I'm not sure I know now—but I nod, and she flushes, staring so hard at something right behind me that I turn too and tell Stray, who is still posing in the doorway, to cancel the act and come say hello. Stray drops his front paw and pads forward, nose to the ground. Pauline blows cigarette smoke into the wisteria vine and draws her feet close to the railing. "What kind is it?" she asks, looking down.

I tell her we don't know, we think he's part Irish Setter and part Golden Retriever; what happened was someone drove him out here to the country and abandoned him and he howled outside our house until one of the children let him come in. Pauline nods as if this were very interesting and says, "Oh really?" but I stop abruptly; I know I am boring. I am growing as dull as Mrs. Dixon, Konrad's mother, who goes on and on about her poodle and who, for a time, actually sent us birthday cards and Christmas presents signed with a poodle paw print. I clasp the broom with both hands and gaze fondly at Stray. I am too young to love a dog; at the same time I am beginning to realize there isn't that much to love in this world. So when Pauline says, "Can it do tricks?" I try to keep the rush of passion from my eyes; I try to keep my voice down.

"He can dance," I admit.

"How great," she says, swaying on the railing. "Truly great."

MOLLY GILES has been a writing student at San Francisco State, and has had other stories in Transfer, Playgirl, *and* New England Review.

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"Yes," I agree. I do not elaborate. I do not tell Pauline that at night, when the children are asleep, I often dance with him. Nor do I confess that the two of us, Stray and I, have outgrown the waltz and are deep into reggae. Stray is a gay and affable partner, willing to learn, delighted to lead. I could boast about him forever, but Pauline, I see, already looks tired. "And you?" I ask. "How have you been?"

For answer she coughs, flexing her small hand so the big gold wedding ring flashes in the sun; she smiles for the first time and makes a great show of pounding her heart as she coughs. She doesn't look well. She's lost weight since the marriage and seems far too pale. "Water?" I ask. "Or how about tea? We have peppermint, jasmine, mocha, and lemon."

"Oh no!" she cries, choking.

"With honey?"

"Oh no! But thank you! So much!"

After a bit she stops coughing and resumes smoking and I realize we both are staring at Stray again. "People," Pauline says with a sigh, "are so cruel. Don't you think?"

I do; I think yes. I tell her Stray was half-starved and mangy when we found him; he had been beaten and kicked, but we gave him raw eggs and corn oil for his coat and had his ear sewn up and took him to the vet's for all the right shots and look at him now. We continue to look at him now. Stray, glad to be noticed, and flattered, immediately trots to the driveway and pees on the wheel of Pauline's new Pinto. "Of course," I complain, "he's worse than a child."

Pauline bows her head and picks one of Stray's hairs off her black velvet jacket. "I guess," she says. She smiles. She really has a very nice smile. It was the first thing I noticed when Konrad introduced us; it's a wide smile, glamorous and trembly, like a movie star's. I once dreamt I had to kiss her and it wasn't bad, I didn't mind. In the dream Konrad held us by the hair with our faces shoved together. It was claustrophobic but not at all disgusting. I remember thinking, when I awoke: Poor Konrad, he doesn't even know how to punish people, and it's a shame, because he wants to so much. Later I noticed that Pauline's lips, when she's not smiling, are exactly like Konrad's, full and loose and purplish, sad. I wonder if when they kiss they feel they're making a mirror; I would. Whether the rest of Pauline mirrors Konrad is anyone's guess. I have never seen her eyes, of course, because of the dark glasses. Her hair is blonde and so fine that the tips of her ears poke through. She is scarcely taller than one of the children, and it is difficult to think of her as Konrad's "executive assistant"; she seems a child, dressed up. She favors what the magazines call the "layered look"—I suspect because she is ashamed of her bottom. She has thin shoulders but a heavy bottom. Well, I want to tell her, who is not ashamed of their bottom? If not their bottom their thighs or their breasts or their wobbly female bellies; who among us is perfect, Pauline?

Instead of saying a word of this, of course, I sigh and say, "Some days it seems all I do is sweep up after that dog." Stray, good boy, rolls in dry leaves and vomits some grass. As if more were needed, as if Stray and I together were conducting an illustrated lecture, I swish the broom several times on the painted porch floor. The straw scrapes my toes. What Pauline doesn't know—because I haven't told her, and because she won't come inside—is that I keep the broom by the front door for show. I keep it to show the Moonies, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses who stop by the house that I've no time to be saved, can't be converted. I use it to lean on when I'm listening, lean on when I'm not; I use it to convince prowlers of my prowess and neighbors of my virtue; I use it for everything, in fact, but cleaning house. I feel no need to clean house, and certainly not with a broom. The rooms at my back are stacked to the rafters with dead flowers and song sheets, stuffed bears and bird nests, junk mail and sea shells, but to Pauline, perhaps, my house is vast, scoured, and full of light—to Pauline, perhaps, my house is in order. But who knows, with Pauline? She gives me her beautiful smile, then drops her eyes to my bathrobe hem and gives me her faint, formal frown. She pinches the dog hair between her fingers and tries to wipe it behind a leaf on the yellowing vine.

"I don't know how you manage," is what she says. She shakes her head. "Between the dog," she says, grinding her cigarette out on the railing, "and the children . . ." She sits huddled in the wan freckled sunlight with the dead cigarette curled in the palm of her hand, and after a minute, during which neither of us can think of one more thing to say, she lights up another. "It was the children," she says at last, "I really wanted to see."

"They'll be sorry they missed you," I tell her politely.

"Yes," Pauline says. "I'd hoped . . ."

"Had you but phoned," I add, just as politely, dropping my eyes and sweeping my toes. The children are not far away. They said they were going to the end of the lane to pick blackberries for pie, but what they are actually doing is showing their bare bottoms to passing cars and screaming "Hooey Hooey." I know this because little Dixie Steadman, who used to babysit before she got her Master's Degree in Female Processes, saw them and called me. "Why are you letting your daughters celebrate their femininity in this burlesque?" Dixie asked. Her voice was calm and reasonable and I wanted to answer, but before I could there was a brisk papery rustle and she began to read rape statistics to me, and I had to hold the phone at arm's length and finally I put it to Stray's ear and even he yawned, showing all his large yellow teeth, and then I put the receiver down, very gently, and we tiptoed away. What I'm wondering now is what "Hooey" means. I'd ask Pauline, who would be only too glad to look it up for me (her curiosity and industry made her, Konrad said, an invaluable assistant, right from the start), but I'm afraid she'd mention it to Konrad and then he would start threatening to take the children away; he does that; he can't help it; it's like a nervous tic. He loves to go to court. Of course he's a lawyer, he has to. Even so, I think he overdoes it. I never understood the rush to divorce me and marry Pauline; we were fine as we were but he says my problem is that I have no morals and perhaps he's right, perhaps I don't. Both my divorce and Pauline's wedding were performed in court, and I think both by Judge Benson. The marriage couldn't have been statelier than the dissolution, and if I were Pauline, only twenty-four and

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getting married for the very first time, I would have been bitter. I would have insisted on white lace or beige anyway and candles and lots of fresh flowers, but Pauline is not one to complain. Perhaps she feels lucky to be married at all; perhaps she feels lucky to be married to Konrad. Her shoulders always droop a little when she's with him, I've noticed, and she listens to him with her chin tucked in and her wrists poised, as if she were waiting to take dictation. Maybe she adores him. But if she does she must learn not to take him too seriously or treat him as if he matters; he hates that; he can't deal with that at all. I should tell her this, but there are some things she'll have to find out for herself. All I tell her is that the girls are gone, up the lane, picking berries.

"How wonderful," she says, exhaling. "Berries."

"Blackberries," I tell her. "They grow wild here. They grow all over."

"In the city," she says, making an effort, "a dinky little carton costs eighty-nine cents." She smiles. "Say you needed three cartons to make one pie," she asks me. "How much would that cost?"

I blink, one hand on my bathrobe collar.

"Two-sixty-seven." Her smile deepens, dimples. "Two-sixty-seven plus tax when you buy a whole frozen pie for one-fifty-six giving you a savings of one-eleven at least. They don't call them convenience foods," Pauline says, "for nothing."

"Are you sure," I ask, after a minute, "you don't want some tea?"

"Oh no!"

"Some coffee?"

"Oh no!"

"A fast glass of wine?"

She chuckles, cheerful, but will not answer. I scan the sky. It's close, but cloudless. If there were to be a thunderstorm—and we often have thunderstorms, this time of year—Pauline would have to come in. Or would she? I see her, erect and dripping, defiant.

"Mrs. Dixon," I offer, "had a wonderful recipe for blackber . . ."

"Mrs. Dixon?"

For a second I almost see Pauline's eyes. They are small and tired and very angry. Then she tips her head to the sun and the glasses cloud over again.

"Konrad's mother."

"Yes," she says. She lights another cigarette, shakes the match out slowly. "I know."

"A wonderful recipe for blackberry cake. She used to say that Konrad never liked pie."

"I know."

"Just cake."

"I know."

"What I found out, Pauline, is that he likes both."

"We never eat dessert," Pauline says, her lips small and sad again. "It isn't good for us and we just don't have it."

Stray begins to bark and wheel around the garden and a second later the children appear, Letty first, her blonde hair tangled and brambly like mine, then Alicia, brown-eyed like Konrad, and fat, then Sophie, who looks like no one unless—yes—with her small proud head, a bit like Pauline. The children are giggling and they deliberately smash into each other as they zig-zag down the driveway. "Oops," they cry, with elaborate formality, "*do* forgive me. *My* mistake." As they come closer we see all three are scratched and bloody with berry juice. One holds a mason jar half-full and one has a leaky colander and one boasts a ruined pocket. Pauline closes her eyes tight behind her dark glasses and holds out her arms. The girls, giggling, jostle toward her. They're wild for Pauline. She tells them stories about kidnappers and lets them use her calculator. With each kiss the wooden railing rocks and lurches; if these visits keep up I will have to rebuild the porch, renew the insurance. I carry the berries into the kitchen, rinse them off, and set them to drain. When I come back outside Pauline stands alone on the porch. Stains bloom on her blouse and along her out-thrust chin.

"Come in," I urge, "and wash yourself off."

She shakes her head very fast and smiles at the floor. "No," she says. "You see, I have to go."

The children are turning handsprings on the lawn, calling "Watch me! me! me!" as Stray dashes between them, licking their faces. I walk down the driveway to see Pauline off. As I lift my hand to wave she turns and stares past me, toward the house; I turn too, see nothing, no one, only an old wooden homestead, covered with yellowing vines, a curtain aflutter in an upstairs window, a red door ajar on a dark brown room.

"Thank you," she cries. Then she throws her last cigarette onto the gravel and grinds it out and gets into her car and backs out the driveway and down to the street and away.

Once she turns the corner I drop my hand and bite the knuckles, hard. Then I look back at the house. Konrad steps out, a towel gripped to his waist. He is scowling; angry, I know, because he's spent the last half-hour hiding in the shower with the cat litter box and the tortoise. He shouts for his shoes. I find them toed out in flight, one in the bedroom, one down the hall. As he hurries to tie them I tell him a strange thing has happened: it seems I've grown morals.

"What?" Konrad snaps. He combs his hair with his fingers when he can't find my brush.

"Us," I say. "You. Me. Pauline. It's a lot of hooey," I tell Konrad. "It is."

Konrad turns his face this way, that way, scrubs a space clear in the mirror. "Do you know what you're saying?" he says to the mirror.

I think. I think, Yes. I know what I'm saying. I'm saying goodbye. I'm saying, Go home.

And when he has gone and the girls are asleep and the house is night-still, I remember the pie. I roll out the rich dough, flute it and fill it with berries and sugar, lemons and spice. We'll have it for breakfast, the children and I; we'll share it with Stray. "Would you like that?" I ask him. Stray thumps his tail but he's not looking at me; his head is cocked, he's listening to something else. I listen too. A faint beat comes from the radio on the kitchen counter. Even before I turn it up I can tell it's a reggae beat, strong and sassy. I'm not sure I can catch it. Not sure I should try. Still, when Stray bows, I curtsy. And when the song starts, we dance. □

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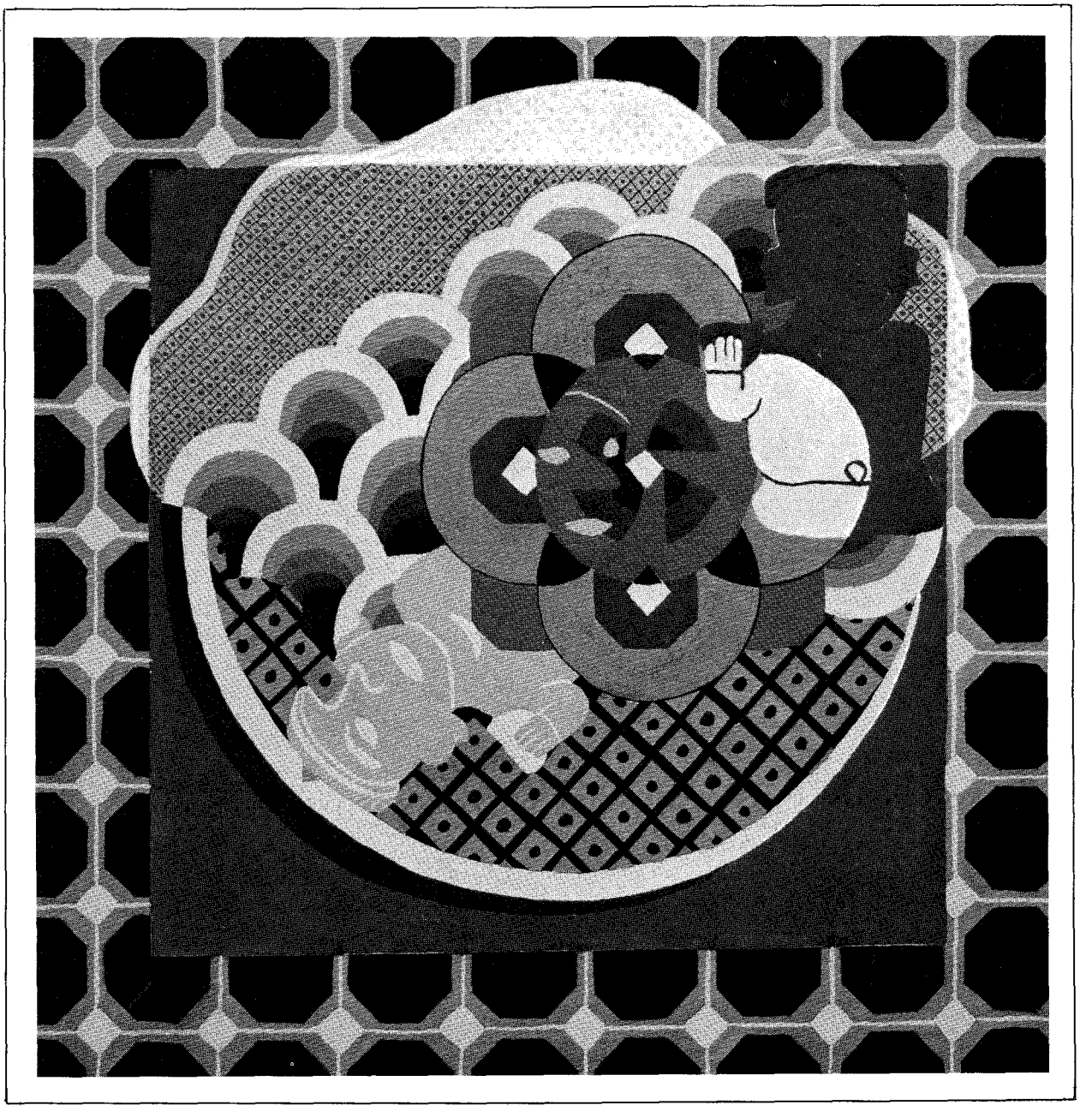
CARL H. CLATTERBUCK

THE KING OF PANGO PANGO



In 1944, my father met the Prince of Pango Pango. They were in the Army together in Nancy, France. A photograph shows my father, boyish, in a plaid kilt and a beret standing beside the Prince. The Prince, whose name is long and difficult to pronounce in Samoan, who my father called simply, Pango, is a large man with a big round stomach and a round, balding head. The Prince is also

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wearing a kilt, but it is too small so he holds it together with one hand at his side. He is wearing dark socks and you can see his garters. Both my father and the Prince are stinking drunk. The photograph is old. There are creases in it, and it looks as if it had been put through an olive-drab wash.

"I told you, Brother," my father has called me that ever since my sister was born, "what ole Pango said. Said all they do is fish, diddle and dive for pearls. Hell, half the time they don't even wear clothes." My father's eyes brightened up when he said this like they do when he goes to the mailbox expecting the registered letter announcing the results of the Irish Sweepstakes.

It was a Friday morning in late August the summer after my first year of college. The two of us were on the roof. We had gone up to adjust the leader wires on the antenna. We finished and were just leaning back on the slope of the roof. It was quiet. The sun was hot, but the roof was still cool under the seat of my pants.

I looked out over our back yard into the neighbors', the Pollards. From that height, it was an amazing thing to see. Plaster elves with red pointed hats were all over the yard carrying wheelbarrows full of flowers, fishing in little plastic bowls buried in the ground. Metallic globes on pedestals and birdbaths, like toadstools, sprung out of the putting green lawn. I could see Elmer Pollard, watering can in hand, stooping amid rows of sunflowers and tomato plants, wearing a yellow straw hat with a built-in green plastic visor.

"You can say what you want about ole Elmer," said my father. "But that's one hell of a back yard."

I looked beyond Elmer Pollard to the new high school. Sprinklers sent gigantic sprays arching out over the shiny green grass on the football field. Two people jogged around the black oval of the track. The day was clear; the sky a rich powder blue. Contrails seemed so close you could almost touch them. My eyes followed a small path that led from the school to a gate in our back yard. I looked down into the turquoise of our swimming pool. It appeared to have no water in it at all. I could hear the faint gurgle of water running down the strainer into the pool filter.

"I bet ole Pango," said my father, "is king of the whole goddamn island. At least, that's what he said. He said he'd be king."

"I didn't know you knew any royalty," I said.

"Oh shit, yes," said my father.

The sun was hot. I took off my shirt and walked over to the edge of the roof. "You know, I never thought about it, but this would be a hell of a dive," I said. "If you got out far enough, you wouldn't have any trouble."

My father walked over to the edge. He wasn't wearing a shirt. He had on a pair of tan slacks without a belt and white tennis shoes with ship pilot wheels on their sides. He stood there on the edge looking down into the pool. The deep end was the closest to us, less than fifteen feet from the back door of our house.

I tried to imagine what it would be like to jump into the pool. I could almost do it. My stomach tingled. I had the same feeling at Waterman Elementary School when I tried to look over the banister into the stairwell. The building was old and I could never get close enough to the edge to look down. I didn't think about getting hurt, just the horrible jar of hitting the marble floors, the jar your whole body feels when you step off a curb you haven't seen.

"Well," said my father. "Who goes first?"

I looked down at the pool. I was thirsty. I thought how good a cold beer would taste, but knew there was none in the house.

"Christ, Dad. Look. You have to hit right in the center, otherwise, you'll hit the sides of the pool." I shivered when I thought of getting a bad footing off the roof and landing on the pool's cement edging.

"Then you're not going?" asked my father. He was serious. I stood with my knees slightly bent and felt the sun on my shoulders and back and on the top of my head.

"Come on," I said. I started for the ladder. "Let's get something to drink."

"Then get out of the way," he said. He went halfway up the roof. He bent over and took off his shoes. Then his pants. He stood there on the roof, barefoot, in a pair of light blue, low-rise Jockey shorts. He said, "Move," with a frightening determination.

The wind parted the salt and pepper hair on his chest. I looked at the hole the size of a golf ball in his right leg where he was hit in Normandy. He had almost lost that leg. One drunk night at four in the morning, he told me he took out his revolver and held it with both hands on the doctor when he heard the doctor talk of taking it off.

"Come on, Dad," I said. But he was already running down the slope of the roof, his arms dangling loose at his sides. The expression on his face scared me. His bare right foot hit the edge of the roof. The shingles creaked and the drainpipe rattled. And then I imagined him crumpled on the cement, white shattered bones sticking out of his tanned skin. But he was in a good arch over the pool, feet first. Just before he hit the water, he tucked into a cannonball. Water splashed over the side of the house and went in through the screen where my mother stood washing the dishes. She screamed, thinking my father had fallen off the roof.

He came up slowly, white bubbles fizzing all around him. The pool's cement edging was wet. He didn't start laughing at first, he blew water out of his nose, then wiped the hair off his forehead. He grinned up at me.

"You're out of your mind!" yelled my mother from the screen door. My father just laughed.

"So, Brother, you're not coming down the easy way?" he said as I started down the ladder.

"No," I said. "Not today." Then I climbed down the ladder carrying his shoes in one hand and his pants slung over my shoulder.

Saturday morning the phone rang at six. It was my father; his voice low, the words a little slurred. Typewriters and office noises were in the background. I could hear my mother pick up the extension in the bedroom.

"Brother," said my father, "I need you to do a little something for me. Christ, I'm in jail."

Adrenalin tingled in my stomach when I thought of the night before. My mother never liked the old man to

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drink around the house. So he kept a bottle in the garage. Three or four times during a TV show he'd get up and go outside. "Where you going, Dad?" "Just out here a minute." He drank Bacardi or lime-flavored vodka so you wouldn't smell it on his breath. By eleven o'clock he'd be drunk. Then my mother would hide the keys to the car.

Friday night my old man got a wild hair — maybe to make a last call someplace or to see a girl or maybe just to drive around in our new car, a '67 rose-beige T-Bird with white bucket seats. He paid eighty a month for that car, as much as a lot of people paid for rent, and the old lady always hid the keys someplace different.

From deep in his diaphragm, he yelled, "Keys! The goddamn keys!"

The yelling cut through the walls and floors into the basement where I had a room. I walked up the stairs into the dining room. My mother sat at the table, her hair freshly done and shiny black from the beauty shop.

"Give him the keys," I said.

My father stood, swaying back and forth in the doorway with one hand in his pocket. "He'll kill himself," said my mother, and a ring, a cluster of diamonds, sparkled in the light from a fixture above the dining room table. A diamond, she tells her friends, for every year of their marriage and a few more for all the crap.

"Just give him the keys. You'll come back in a little while, won't you, Dad?"

"I'm stayin out all night!" he yelled and then he turned to me and winked. "Might end up in Pango Pango."

"We need groceries tomorrow. You'd better be back in time to get groceries," said my mother. She padded in bare nyloned feet down the hallway leading to their bedroom. From a closet she dug out one of her old pocketbooks, a dark blue one with beads all over it, where she kept things. She glared at my father, her chin dimpled, her eyes ready to tear as she pushed the keys across the table at him.

She had the same look in her eyes when we moved up North. My uncle moved us in his light blue '57 Chevrolet station wagon. I rode up front between my father and my uncle. The three of us had gotten flattops for the trip. My mother rode in the back with piles of clothes and blankets and pillows on either side of her. She spread mustard on sandwiches with a white plastic knife. He hair was in a ponytail and she cried most of the way.

"Now, Beautiful," said my uncle, looking in the rear view mirror, "don't worry a bit. You're gonna like it up here, I swear."

"Sure she will," said my father and he took a slug off a Coke in a green bottle that didn't shine anymore because of the scratches.

Before my father left that night, he put on a light blue, V-neck sweater and a pair of alligator loafers. He bent over to polish the loafers. The smell of the polish reminded me of Sunday mornings, getting ready for church, my father putting the part in my hair as I stood on the lid of the toilet, when we used to do things like go to church.

He looked good as he went out the door. His hair was just beginning to gray around the temples, and he's never weighed more than one sixty-five in his whole life. I didn't think about when he was coming back because I had no idea. He always showed up or called, and he'd never been gone for more than a weekend.

So now he was in jail. I sat on the edge of my bed with the telephone receiver cradled between my shoulder and neck. I picked up the clock.

"The jail?" I said.

"Yeah, Christ," said my father. "Just a minute. I got to do somethin'. Hold on."

As I sat listening to the office noises in the background, the airy voices of men talking, I thought of another early morning call I had gotten that summer.

I had been with Paula driving around in her father's black Dodge drinking vodka and Coke. I pulled the Dodge up to our house and Paula walked me to the door. We stood there kissing until the next-door neighbor's car lights flashed on us as he pulled into his driveway.

When I got home, I instinctively checked the kitchen counter for my father's watch. He was in bed when his watch was on top of a pile of letters and bills at the end of the counter. It wasn't there.

On my way downstairs to my room, the phone rang. I ran to answer it. A woman's voice asked, "You Sky's son?"

I said I was.

"He say tell you come over here an' get him."

"Where is he?"

"Four-ten Roosevelt. You comin'?"

"Roosevelt? Let me talk to him."

"Honey, he ain't gonna do you no good to talk to now. You just better come get him."

"Is anything wrong? Where's Roosevelt?"

"I'm tired an' I wanta go to bed. Roosevelt's off Emmet. Just come get him." She hung up.

I went into the kitchen and made a cup of instant coffee with hot tap water. My mother heard me. She came into the kitchen in a shrimp-colored housecoat, holding the neck closed at the collar.

"That your father on the phone?"

"Yeah, kinda. I'm going after him."

"I don't know what he's into," she said. "He called some colored boys over to pick him up. No tellin' what you'll get into going over there. I wouldn't go. Let him get out of his own jams."

"I shouldn't be too long," I said.

My mother went back into her bedroom and got the keys to the car.

I took the back way to Battle Creek. I drove with the bright lights on, the small red light in the shape of a thunderbird glowing from the middle of the instrument panel. No other cars passed me on the way. I drove the length of Emmet Street before I found Roosevelt. It was in a bad part of town. Most houses had green asphalt siding meant to look like bricks. A few places had tar paper additions. Cadillacs, Buicks and Oldsmobiles with FM antennas and whitewalls four inches wide were parked in driveways or in front of the houses in the dirt.

Four-ten was dark. No porch light. No cars in the drive. I pulled in and left the engine running. No one came to the door. I rechecked the address and knocked again. No one came. I went around to the side of the

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house. I thought maybe I could knock on a window. A dog barked inside.

Just as I started around to the back of the house, a white Riviera screeched to a stop across the driveway, blocking the T-Bird in. Three black men got out and walked around to the front of the T-Bird. One guy looked inside. The driver's pants were the color of Orange Crush.

"What you doin'?" he shouted.

"I've come to pick up my old man. You know him? S.K. Shakely?"

The three of them moved closer. "What 'chu doin' around that house?"

"I said I've come to get my father. Look I'm not doing anything."

One of the men behind the guy in the orange pants said, "The mutherfucker . . ." They started toward me.

I said, "Look . . ." and I didn't know what else to say. One guy had something in his hand.

They were right up to me; there was no place to run when the porch light came on. The porch had been screened in and boxes were stacked halfway up the screens. A black woman stood in the doorway. Behind her was my father. My father had his hand over his eyes, shielding them from the bare overhead light bulb and the glare of the T-Bird's headlights.

"That you, C.D.?" said my father. He looked around to where I stood. He squinted. "Well, Brother, what 'cha doin' over there?"

"All the lights were off. I was going around to the back."

My father stood there a moment, then he looked at the three black men, then again at me. "What the hell?" he said. He walked off the porch and we met in the lights of the T-Bird.

"C.D.," said my father, "this is my son here, S.K., Jr."

I offered my hand to the black man in the orange pants. We shook.

"Look, man," he said. "I didn't know nothin' 'bout you."

"Sure," I said.

"Jesus," said my father. "What the hell time is it?"

I told him about four o'clock. He shook his head. Then he looked up at C.D. He hunched my ribs with his elbow. "I bet, Brother, you don't know about ole C.D. here. 'S got one of the biggest guns in Battle Creek." My father measured up on his forearm and winked at me.

C.D. leaned against the hood of the T-Bird and smiled up at my father.

"Go ahead, C.D. Show him." My father kept looking at me. "I swear, Brother. It's the biggest goddamn thing you'll ever see."

The two guys chuckled. One guy said, "Yeah. Go ahead, C.D."

C.D. shrugged his shoulders, then shook his head looking down at the gravel in the driveway. Without looking up, he reached across the front of his pants and undid a row of four snaps on the side. I heard the tappets ticking in the T-Bird's engine. I could feel the engine's warmth; smell gas and anti-freeze. C.D.'s orange pants dropped down his lean thighs. He wore a pair of black nylon bikini underwear. The black woman in the doorway said, "You not gonna show it, C.D.?" She came to where we were standing.

C.D. reached into his underwear and pulled it out. It was huge. It didn't look real.

"Lawd in heaven!" said the black woman. She put her hand to the side of her face, her mouth wide open.

My father just shook his head. C.D. stood holding it in his hand, looking down at it without cracking a smile, like it was a baby or a rainbow trout. One of the guys walked closer to get a better look. "Whoo-oo, C.D.!" C.D. put it back in his pants. My father winked at me again. "A real monster," he said.

"It's unbelievable," I said.

C.D. asked if we wanted a drink. He went to his car and brought back a pint of R&R and offered it around. I didn't take any and when it got to my father he took the bottle and then looked at me.

"Christ, Dad," I said. "It's late. We better get going."

He hesitated a moment with the bottle in his hand. "Yeah, Brother. You're right. Mama's gonna have a fit." He passed the bottle back to C.D.

I drove and my father sat beside me smoking a cigarette. My father broke out laughing. He looked over at me. "I thought you'd shit," he said, "when ole C.D. whipped out that big ole thing."

"Believe me. I've never seen anything like it."

"Wears a jock strap most of the time," said my father. "Never slows him down, though. Jesus, does he get it." He sat back in the seat and didn't say anything for a while. Then he leaned forward a little and said, "Reminds me a lot of ole Pango. Pango did OK. Jesus, that guy could live."

"What was he doing in the Army, anyway?" I said.

"Interpreter. He knew French and German like he knew English. I never heard him, but they say he could talk Chinese."

My father looked straight ahead, out over the hood. "I told you," he said, "when he inspected that whore house full of French girls. He just walked to the head of the line, there's guys lined up down to the street and says he's the Government Whore House Inspector. He used tongue depressors to spread those girls' things apart. And he got the two best ones for us. Pretty things, too."

He laughed hard and then wiped his eyes. We drove without passing any cars. The first bit of light was just beginning to show.

My father opened the glove compartment, looked through the eight-track tapes and then put a Merle Haggard tape into the tape player. There was a burst of sound. Merle Haggard sang, "Tonight, I'm gonna love somebody to death" and my father turned the volume down low enough so we could still talk.

"Listen," he said. "I haven't told your mother, but I'm gettin' out."

"What do you mean, 'gettin' out'?"

"Well, I'll tell ya. Thought I'd get out to see ole Pango. Without your goddamn mother along. Living with that woman is gettin' old, Brother."

"What in the *hell* are you going to do in Pango Pango?"

My father glared at me in disbelief. He pushed the

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button that controlled the power window. It moved down smoothly. He threw out his cigarette and then turned back to face me. "What'm *I* gonna do in Pango Pango?" he said. He looked out over the hood. "Nothin', but a little fishin', a little diddlin' and a little divin' for pearls. Pull over here."

He got out and took a leak, looking over a field of new corn and beyond it the expressway. He stood in the yellow interior light facing away from me, the door wide open.

And now he's on the phone. It's six in the morning and there's a silver glow outside the window. I hear my mother breathing on the extension.

"You there, Brother?"

"Yeah," I say, "but where are you really?"

"The jail."

"You're serious, right?"

"Aw, they're all screwed up. I haven't had a drink since I left the house."

"Jesus, Dad."

My father doesn't say anything. I hear voices mumble in the background. My father laughs and says, "Yeah, boy."

"What?" I say.

"Oh, it's ole Highway Patrol. You know him. The cop."

My mother yells in, "You're still drunk!"

"Aw, hush up. Tell her to get off the line, Brother."

"Hush up, yourself. What a mess you're in," says my mother.

"Okay, okay," I say. "Now, Dad, what do you want me to do?"

"Is she off the line?"

"Yeah, she's off the line. Go ahead."

"I need a hundred dollars. Pick up my check from Gus at the terminal. Go ahead and sign my name on the back."

And my mother says, "Don't you have any money?"

"Tell her to get off the line."

"Okay, but don't you have any?"

"It's in the car and they got the car someplace."

"The bank doesn't open until ten."

"I know. Get here when you can. I got a surprise."

It was a gray morning with a fine mist in the air, almost rain. I didn't feel bad about forging my father's name because our names are the same. I signed the check; the bank teller knew me, she was pretty, but I just wanted to get out of there. I didn't feel like talking.

The next-door neighbor loaned me his station wagon and I parked it across the street from the jail. The jail hooked onto the courthouse. I walked past a couple of trustees trimming the grass along the edge of the sidewalk. Their coveralls were faded and looked too clean.

I pulled open a thick glass door. Several black ladies and a guy with long sideburns and an enormous pot belly stood along the room's dirty walls, waiting. A couple of people sat at the desks where you take the written part of your driver's test. Two Mexican guys I went to high school with nodded hello to me. I felt their eyes on me after I passed.

I walked over to a window with chicken-wire mesh running through it and talked through a hole. I told a young cop, who stopped typing and looked up, that I had come to get my father, S.K. Shakely. He told another cop who was just standing around, leaning against a counter, to get Shakely. He disappeared. The room's walls were painted half light green, and half dirty white, with a lot of paint chipped off, showing bare concrete. A calendar with a cop and a little girl and a big yellow school bus hung taped to the wall. I could smell cigar smoke coming through the hole in the window.

I saw my old man. He walked in front of a big cop wearing a gun and my father looked small, boyish compared to him. The cop had a big gut and wore his gun belt under it.

The young cop at the typewriter pointed to a door and told me to come back to where they were, that papers had to be filled out. My father stood at the counter, signing his name, the big cop beside him.

My father looked up and said, "Jesus Christ, Brother. I been waitin' for you. The two of us got somethin' to do today."

I asked him what and he said, "Tell ya a little later."

He looked as if he had just woke up and I handed him the money. His face looked bad, a lot of deep lines. I wanted to get out of there. I was sweating. The big cop walked across the floor to get a drink, the leather on his gun belt creaked as he walked.

My father took a pink copy of some paper, folded it and raised his sweater and put it in his shirt pocket. His hands weren't too steady. He asked the young cop when he could pick up the car.

"Anytime after twelve."

My father nodded. "Okay," he said. "Will do."

The young cop said, "Bye now," as we walked out the door.

My father and I didn't say anything as we walked through the waiting room. My father whistled a country tune I couldn't recognize. I saw the two Mexican guys and they nodded goodbye.

Once we were outside, my father asked me how I got down to the jail. I told him that I had borrowed the neighbor's car.

"Good," he said. "That's good."

I got into the car and put my arm along the top of the passenger seat and then turned to back out of the parking space. When I looked around, my father handed me a small folder. It was from a travel agency. I opened it while my father watched me, his eyes wide open, his tired look gone.

I held two tickets on United Airlines Flight 142, leaving Chicago at five p.m. with a four hour layover in Los Angeles, arriving in Honolulu at three a.m.

"From Honolulu we get a boat and in just a little over a day and a night, we're in Pango Pango. What do you think of that?"

We were out in traffic and a car behind us honked. "Just a minute," I said and I pulled back into the parking space. I rested both arms on the steering wheel. We were to leave that day.

"So, Brother, what do you think?"

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"You're out of your mind," I said.

"It's been said before," he said.

"Does Mom know?"

My father shook his head no.

"I've got it all taken care of," he said. "Got a month and a half off work, maybe more if I push it. Got the tickets and we're leaving at five o'clock tonight."

"This is something you talk about for a long time before you do it. You just don't get the tickets and go. What's Mom going to do?"

"There's money in the bank."

I glanced down at the tickets in my hand. My father checked through his pockets for a cigarette. He pushed the cigarette lighter in on the dashboard. I shook my head. He waited for an answer. I tried to think.

One time we were on a corner in downtown Detroit. My father poked me in the ribs and pointed to the man beside him. It was Mickey Mantle. I had just broken my arm playing Midget League baseball and it was casted up to the elbow. Jesus, I wanted his autograph. My father wouldn't do anything. He mouthed, "Ask him." I just stood there looking at Mickey Mantle's broad shoulders in his gray suit. My father gritted his teeth, "Ask him." The light changed and I barely managed to tap his arm. He stopped right there in the crosswalk and signed my cast, "Mickey Mantle" in big script handwriting.

I sat there in the driver's seat. I thought of Mickey Mantle smiling as he wrote his name on my cast. My hands were sweating and I could smell the plastic of the steering wheel. I thought again of my father jumping off the roof into the swimming pool, water going everywhere, and that big grin on his face when he looked up at me.

"I don't know," I said. "We'd have to pack and it's ten-thirty now."

"We'll just take a little and buy it when we need it."

"When are you going to tell Mom?"

"Thought maybe we'd call her from L.A. or Hawaii."

"She'll never forgive us."

"It'll be good for her. Hell, a vacation."

I leaned back in the seat. In five hours we'd be on a plane, sipping drinks out of clear plastic cups. I looked at my father taking a drag off a cigarette, the window beside him rolled down a couple inches to keep the smoke from bothering me. I broke out laughing.

"I've always wondered what was under one of those grass skirts," I said.

"Well," said my father, "we'd better damn sight find out."

"You better believe it," I said and it was fixed. My father took the tickets out of my hand and put them in my shirt pocket. He sat back in the seat. I looked down at the tickets and thought of pictures of the South Seas I'd seen in *National Geographic*. I imagined lagoons and waterfalls and Tahitian women with beautiful skin on beaches of the whitest sand.

I looked at my father. He tried to be calm, but his eyes sparkled.

"Does ole Pango know we're coming?" I said.

"Hell, no," said my father. "We'll surprise him." □

MARK VINZ

FATHER TO FATHER

Children, Father—
how strange each day
to see more of you in me,
more of me in them.
This is one game for which
you never taught me rules,
and now as I begin to feel my age
move in me like lodestone
perhaps we have something
to talk out after all—
two old men unsure
of where it really starts or ends.

I sit up late
scratching something out
while all my darlings sleep,
and curse the noisy neighbor
or the barking dogs—
that never wake them anyway.
This seems to be my job,
to play their night
like some shadowy Orpheus—
I, who can remember only the dark,
a father 30 years ago at a kitchen table
moving toward first light
with bread, milk, and *Reader's Digest*.
What was it *you* heard—
you, who understand
neither sons nor poems?

Perhaps this same thing I pass on,
so one day all that's given
is returned.
Love? Duty? Fear? Hard words
for men who speak so sparingly.
Tonight it's time to say it, Father,
what's taken all these years:
I have daughters, you have a son.
Only the name ends here.

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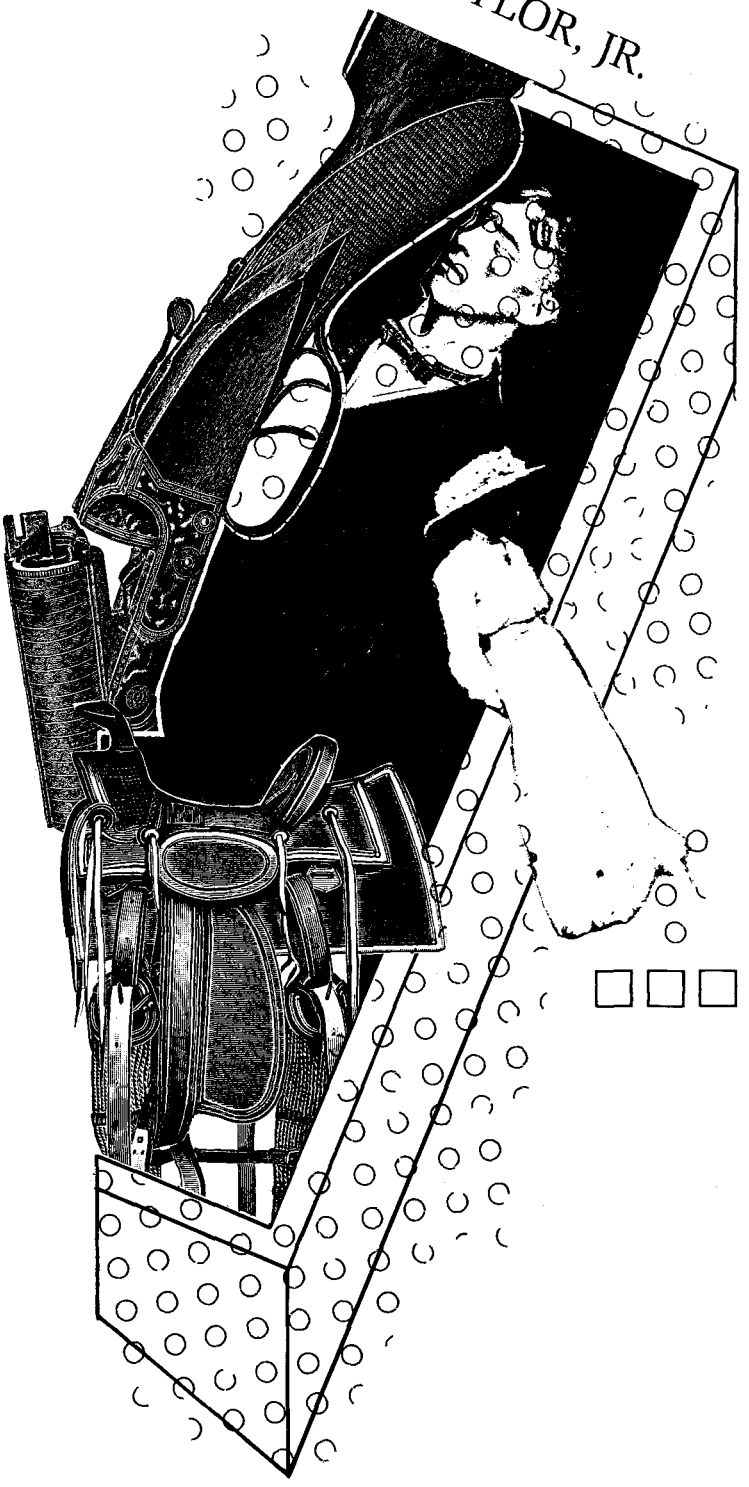
ROBERT TAYLOR, JR., teaches at Bucknell. His fiction has appeared in Western Humanities Review, Center, Agni Review, *and* The Ohio Review.

HIDEOUT, YOUNGER'S BEND C. 1874

ROBERT TAYLOR, JR.



He runs all the way to the river. It's a hot day. She calls after him, but no matter. She won't come this far. The man won't either. The man will take the fiddle out of its dark case and, still standing, play it for her while she sits on the porch. He takes off his shirt, folds it. The rock is hot against his bare feet. He sets down the pistol next to the shirt on the rock so that the sun can warm it. It is all right that he has it. She has said that he might hold it and that some day she will teach him to shoot it so that he can hit even the fastest targets. She keeps the pistol clean. He watches her hold it in her lap and rub the handle with a soft cloth. She sings softly—to herself, but he always listens, likes to hear her hum those tunes the fiddler plays, the slow, sad ones she has him play for her when they go across the river to the caves.

At the caves the rocks are cool. In her white dress and good leather boots, her long hair tucked up under a broad-brimmed hat tied with a veil under her chin, she climbs easily, shunning the help of the fiddler. Trees sway, pines, he thinks these are pines, yes, pines, they have needles, soft and brown beneath their trunks to lie down upon. She climbs easily. The man carries the fiddle in a black box with part of a belt for a handle. *Looks like a little coffin, don't it. I made it that way on purpose.* He can only see the man up there. She is inside the cave, or in the dark part back just far enough to make her hidden. The man stands facing the mouth of the cave, his fiddle sticking out from his chest, a small dark thing from where he watches among the trees at the place where the ground is smooth and hard and hidden by thick clusters of bushes with bright leaves.

He keeps an eye on the pistol. There is a hollowed-out place on the rock where it can safely wait, no risk of its falling into the water, where he can still see it shining close by him. The water flows cool and swift and the round slick stones at the bottom move only a little when his toes touch them. When she is gone, the pistol goes with her. She carries it in a fine leather holster strapped tight around her waist. She lets him put the pistol in its place because he has been good and has promised to be a man when she is gone. He is going to be a grand and brave man, she tells him, and some day a woman will love him and he will make that woman very happy. Near her the smell is pleasant, the air better to breathe, and so he breathes it into him deep as he can and fast so that he will get more of it. He likes to run his hand across the top of her dresser, but it is not as good as the holster. She says, Do you like that? Well, here, come here and try it on for size. She pulls it to the last notch, says, Oh, it's too big, and laughs, drawing him into her arms. Mama's big boy. Mama's sweet Eddy.

The water darkens where it runs deeper, but it is not so swift and the feel of the stones giving way to sand is very nice. The barrel of the pistol points away from the river towards the tall trees. The man makes the fiddle sound sad, though it is a long way away and the sound of it mixes with that of the trees and the birds and the sky.

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Sometimes the men invite him to sit on their laps, but the fiddler only wants to shake his hand and does not squeeze it hard like Mr. Starr, but holds it as though he only wants to know how heavy it is. She tells him that Jesse James once held him on his lap and sang a hymn for him and that some day he will want to tell that story to his children. Who is Jesse James, he wants to know. She says, Some say an outlaw, but a real gentleman I say, a good and brave man. These are hard times we live in. It'll not be the same for you. This land is going to be opened up. You'll have a chance.

The shells are warm when they fall in the dirt. It is all right for him to pick them up and keep them. She holds the pistol straight out, her arm not moving at all until after the explosion and then only a little bounce in the air, her bright-colored scarves blowing in the wind like flags. He is ready for the land to open up, says, When it happens will we fall very far, and she laughs, says, No, it's not that kind of opening, and she explains so that he sees what she means, a time when the Indian lands in the west can be settled by people like him who will work hard to improve it, build homes much better than this one, plant and harvest crops.

In her mirror his face does not seem his own. He doesn't know whose it is. He sits before the mirror and touches the marble top of the dresser, takes her big comb and runs it through his hair the way he has seen her do hers. His hair has been long like hers. Now, she says, it is time to cut it. You are getting to be a big boy, Eddy, do you know that? He remembers that it doesn't hurt when hair is cut. She saves some of his, has it in a box, and sometimes he takes it out to look at. It feels soft like hers, and he thinks it really is hers and not his hair at all, or that maybe she is mistaken and it is his sister's hair. The hair on his head feels stiff and does not shine like this hair she keeps in the box, tied with a yellow ribbon.

He wades out into the water until it comes to his shoulders. The current is not so strong here and the water at his feet is very cool, the sand soft like mud coming up between his toes and covering them over until he takes another step. They can't see him from the cave. Even if they knew he was there and were looking for him down here they could not see him. But he can see them. He can see her climbing the rocks, the man not far behind. The moonlight is bright, but it shines on them and not on him. Now she goes into the cave and the man kneels, takes the fiddle out of its case. From down here the man looks small, but he is not. The fiddle must be magic to make such sounds.

2

The man says, Here, you can hold it. It's all right. Yes, she says, you can if you want to. Just don't drop it. It's not as heavy as he expects it to be. The wood seems hard like the marble top of her dresser, but you can see beneath the shininess to the softer part where there are dark shapes like wings. Like this, the man says, pressing its thick end into his neck. Squeeze down on it with your chin and put your hand up here. The trees are making a lot of noise, they sound like many small birds singing at once. It is dark out there. She sits on the porch in her white dress, her face lit by the light from the window. The man is bending down to him, putting the bow in his hand.

He lets the water touch his chin. This is as deep as it goes, but he can make it come higher by bending his knees, and when he sits down all the water is above him, white where the sky touches it. He can hold his breath for a long time and keep his eyes open and listen to the singing far away. In town the old men—Choctaws, she says—come towards him when she is in the building, some of them with canes, their hands curled around the thick tips of the sticks. He hears them humming to themselves. They don't mean for him to hear them. He sits beneath the tree in the shade, watching the door. Soon it will open.

She keeps the pistol in a wooden box in one of the drawers. He lifts the box carefully and sets it down. Also in the drawer are bright-colored pieces of cloth cut in many shapes, long strips and circles and squares, some of the pieces made of a thick furry cloth that feels good rubbed against your cheek, touched to your lips. There are ribbons, these shiny and not thick at all, red and yellow and blue, and at the very back of the drawer three spools of thread. The pistol is wrapped in soft red cloth and is heavy, but he can hold it easily, lift it in front of him the same way she does and keep his arm straight, keep his eye on the barrel of the pistol, pull the trigger if he wants to. The men tell him that they will show him how to hit the target. One of these days, she says.

Now, the man says, you just draw the bow across the strings, not too hard, that's the way. Now you're learning. The sound is not the same as when the man does it. He wants to stop it, but she says, My, ain't that fine, and he says, Do it again now. She is smiling and looks very happy, a breeze making her hair flow just a little to one side, covering part of her cheek and forehead. She looks pretty. The man's fingers, long and thin and strong, close around his hand. Press the string, he says. Press down hard on it and hold it there.

When he comes up, the trees are swaying, the long branches high above moving up and down, the pine needles clustered thick and soft like hair. A red bird lights on the rock, flies quickly away. The pistol is safe. It has not been moved. She keeps the holster in the big chest, tucked between the folded sheets and the pretty dress she says she was wearing on her wedding day. There is a picture of his sister, but it doesn't look like her. The leather darkens where the pistol goes in and fits snug. He pulls the strap tight through the silver buckle and lets the pistol slide easily into its place, keeping his hand on the side of the handle until the very last and then with his palm pressing it the rest of the way down.

He hears their voices but can't make out what they're saying. They might be singing. Jesse, she says, can sing sweeter than any man you'll ever hear, sings the old hymns, and such blue eyes, deep and clear when he looks at you, makes you shiver. He once sat on Jesse's lap. He promises he won't forget to tell his children and she smiles and draws him close to her, where she is soft and warm.

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Eddy boy, my sweet Eddy, Mama loves you, she wishes she could have her little boy and her little girl with her all the time.

He thinks they have gone outside, even though it is dark. The voices sound far away, it might be the trees. There is no one to hear him going down the steps, opening the door. The moon makes long shadows on the porch and the air is warm, still.

And where might your mother be, boy? Mr. Starr carries a rifle in one hand, a string of birds in the other. Here, he says, look at this plump fellow. Some of the men stay a long time. She sits next to them on the porch steps. He can hear their voices from inside, but they do not talk loud. When he lies down in the high grass they can't see him. *Better lay low. Says he's going to get you.* The fiddler laughs and the birds sing.

He pulls the comb through his hair. Some day, she says, he will be a man, bigger than she is, tall as Mr. Starr. He doesn't want to be like Mr. Starr, his head shining through his hair, his hands with dark bristles growing all over the veins on top, his mustache thick and silvery, curling down over his lips. No, she says, she means *Sam* Starr, not old Tom. He'll be handsome like Tom's son Sam. The envelope is inside a small box in the drawer. He takes the hair out and brushes it across his cheeks, careful not to let any of it come loose from the yellow ribbon. His sister isn't here now. Pearl has been gone for some time, to Grandma Reed's, he thinks. His mother is gone too, but will come back soon. He watches the door.

The old men draw nearer. Several keep turning their heads to one side and spitting. The door will open and she will step out and see that he has stayed where she told him to. Look here, the man with the cane says, this is Belle's boy. You lost, boy? Some of the men are humming softly to themselves. This is Belle's boy sitting under a tree! The man points his cane at him, waving it in the air, then laughs. Belle's boy! Tell me, boy, do you know who's your daddy? Is it old Tom Starr? Huh? Look here, here's Belle's boy Eddy, sitting under a tree!

3

He can hear them up ahead. Their voices are soft, almost like whispers. Through the trees he can sometimes see her white dress, a sudden flash and then she is hidden again. The breeze is pleasant, warm, and the smell of the pine needles clean and strong. When she starts to climb the rocks she looks like a bird perched there, the man behind her dark and knotted like shrubbery. At the mouth of the cave they stop and look down, but he is still and hidden by the shadows and the limbs of the trees and they cannot see him. The moon makes the rocks glow. The mouth of the cave is dark.

His daddy is named Jim Reed. He is gone away for a long time.

Would you like to come along, she asks. Sure, the man says, bring him along. He rides next to her in the buggy, not next to the man. The sky has a lot of color in it above the trees and the horse's tail swishes back and forth. When the men come late at night, he wakes up. They are on horseback. He can hear her moving about, her footsteps quick on the plank floor, and the horses neighing and stamping their hooves down below and the men saying things softly to one another. The floor makes his feet cold. From the window the men's hats look round as hoecakes. She steps out from the porch and mounts a horse that one of the men has brought for her, rising easily onto the side of the saddle, taking hold of the reins with one hand and with the other rubbing the neck of the horse.

In the buggy she lets him hold the reins. The horse doesn't mind and the man says, Eddy, you do that well. Then it is dark and she takes the reins. When you look up it is as though the trees are moving, going the other way down the road. Maybe she'd like to have these, Mr. Starr says, handing him the string of birds. Make mighty good eating. Tell her I give them to her. Some of Mr. Starr's teeth are black. The birds hang by their feet and their heads are shiny and smooth-looking. She will pull out all their feathers.

The place is all lit up with lamps and the people smiling and happy, talking loud and laughing. Let him sit up here with me, the man says, and she says, All right, sure, and they get him a chair. *Ain't he the cute one though! Going to dance with me, little feller?* The man takes the fiddle out of the case and strikes the strings, turning the pegs at the same time. Say, he says to the other man, show Eddy here your guitar. The other man has gray bristles all over his face and big hands with thick fingers. The guitar is heavy and has more strings on it than the fiddle. He doesn't want to play it, but the man says, Go ahead and hit it a lick, and so he does and the sound isn't pretty.

I like that fiddle, she says. I could listen to it all the time.

The explosion sounds like it is far away. The man sits down, and then he can't see him. Something has fallen. She comes out then, and even from down here he can hear her: Lord, Lord. What's happened! He runs, then stops quick, lies down flat against the damp ground. Someone else is running. He can hear the footsteps crashing down, a thumping noise, and the leaves hurt, sticks punch. He lies still.

I could listen to it all the time, she says. Some of the men she dances with he has never seen before, big men who swing her fast, making her skirt billow out so that you can see her ankles and her feet stepping quick, the heels of her shoes coming down hard on the floor. She smiles. The man plays the fiddle very fast now. *Two little sisters form a ring, now you're born, now you swing!* He listens to the footsteps. Someone is running fast, coming very close to him. Now he can see the figure. It is a man, walking towards him, no one he recognizes. He doesn't think it's Mr. Starr. When Mr. Starr dances with her he stomps his heels loud and shouts. Her cheeks are red and sometimes her arms swing back and forth. *Going to dance with me, little feller?* The woman holds out her arms and he thinks that he will have to go with her but then she laughs and turns away and gets pulled by a big-bellied man into one of the circles of dancers and doesn't ask him again.

Are you the one killed that fiddler? Or was it your daddy did it? The old man leans on his cane, looking down on him,

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the others behind him humming softly but looking at him. He wants to run, but she has said he is to stay here until she comes back. He looks away from the old man, towards the door. Soon it will open. The old man is laughing.

The music makes him sad, but it is pleasant to listen to it. She has gone inside the cave and the fiddler stands outside, high above him, playing the tunes for her. Something bright flashes from time to time, something moving, maybe the silver tip of the bow. Yes, he thinks that is what it is. When he draws the bow across the strings, she says, My, ain't that fine. Do it again. And the man says, Here, press down your fingers like this. The sound is ugly. He wants to go to her but must lie still or else the man coming towards him through the brush will find him. He thinks maybe it is the fiddle that has fallen. *Now you're born, now you swing!* It's happy music. Everybody is having a good time. The fiddler's heel goes up and down when he plays, and he leans forward, his knees bent, the fiddle snug beneath his chin. Mr. Starr shouts. The old Choctaw man sits next to the lantern with his eyes closed, his cane resting across his lap.

4

He waits very still until he can't hear the footsteps anymore, then waits a little longer. He doesn't want them to find him. The ground is cold but he doesn't mind. When he looks up at the cave he can see her in her white dress. He thinks she is on her knees, but it is hard to be sure. It is probably the fiddle that has fallen. Maybe it has landed on a soft place. It's not heavy like the guitar, and the wood is thin and shiny and hard. When he tilts it something moves inside, something slides, but when he looks in through the narrow hole it is too dark to see anything. The man laughs. Snake rattle, he says. Put it in there to make the music better. From a big copperhead, the man says, biggest you ever seen. Killed him with a hoe. He was sidling right up to me like he didn't mean to stop. Saw that little tongue flickering and heard the tail rattling.

He thinks that might be where the magic comes from.

Reckon you lead a charmed life, she says.

He can hear the trees. He gets up slowly, looks around, can't see the man coming towards him anymore or hear the footsteps. The pistol still shines, but he has to be careful not to drop it and to keep the barrel clean. She holds it on her lap and rubs it with a soft cloth. Her necklaces are in a box that makes music when you open it up, and lined up neatly just beneath her bed are her shoes and boots. The holster is in the big chest, laid down next to the pretty dress. She will wear the dress for him sometime, if he likes, but she thinks that it will probably not fit her the way it did then. That was before he was born.

Now he can run. The wind makes his face feel cool. He thinks that she is still up there with the fiddler, though he can't see her now, can see only the big rocks, the stars bright behind them, too many ever to count. In the buggy on the way home the man says, Ain't the stars beautiful, and she says, Lovely, and the man has his hand on top of hers, the fingers curling around, but it doesn't look like he is squeezing hard. Just lovely, she says. In the daytime the sky is not as far away. When you go under the water and look up, the sky tries to follow you but it can't. It touches the water and makes the water shiver and turn white.

The rocks are smooth and cool. The fiddle may have fallen. He can't see it, though. The old man has his eyes closed almost the whole time. Then, after the last dance, he opens them and lifts his cane, bringing it down hard on the floor and raising himself up. The door opens and there she is. Behind her a man in a dark coat holds onto her elbow and walks with her a little ways then stops, tips his hat, turns, goes back into the building. He can get up now, run and meet her, up the rocks, careful not to drop the pistol. If you look back you can see the space in the trees where the river is, and then, from a little higher, the river itself.

Eddy, oh Eddy, someone's killed him. The man lies still. She is bending over the man, holding his head in her arms. The man is holding onto the bow. She looks at the man and then at him. He doesn't want the pistol. Here, he says, handing it to her. She keeps it clean and shiny in the box. He always puts it back, but he can keep the shells. Someday she will teach him how to shoot it. He will be a man, bigger than she is, and when the land opens up he will have some of it of his own to build a house on and plant crops on. His life, she says, will be different from hers. He will tell his children that Jesse James was not a bad man, that the people who say so never knew him.

It's not Mr. Starr that comes towards him. He doesn't know who the man is, only that he steps quickly through the brush and comes near him and will find him if he looks. He must lie still. The man's legs are large and long, though, like Mr. Starr's. In the water the sounds are far away, like singing, not one person singing, not her, but many voices. It might be the trees. When the fiddle plays, it sounds sad, not like at the dance. He can hear it fine down here. And see the man standing on the rocks outside the cave, playing the fiddle for her. There are many stars and the moon is full and bright, the dark edges of the trees all around against the bottom of the sky.

She is crying. He hands her the pistol, but she doesn't take it and so he puts it on a flat place where it will not fall off. He was a good man, she says. The man is still holding onto the bow, but the fiddle is not there. Where is it, she asks, where is his fiddle. He doesn't know. He thinks it has fallen off, but he hasn't seen it down there. Probably it is hidden in a good safe place. He shows her where he has put the pistol. She doesn't take it when she goes into town, but when the men come at night and wait for her on their horses she goes out and he sees that she has it strapped around her waist in the holster. She always brings it back.

Inside the cave it is very dark. He doesn't go far. When he turns around he can see her kneeling with the man's head in her lap. The light is bright out there. In here the rocks are smooth along the wall and the floor, and it is cool and quiet. You can walk deep into the mountain if you want to, but unless you're with someone who knows the way you might get lost. The fiddle is nowhere to be found. He thinks it might be hidden in the branches of the trees. Tomorrow, she says, we'll find it. □

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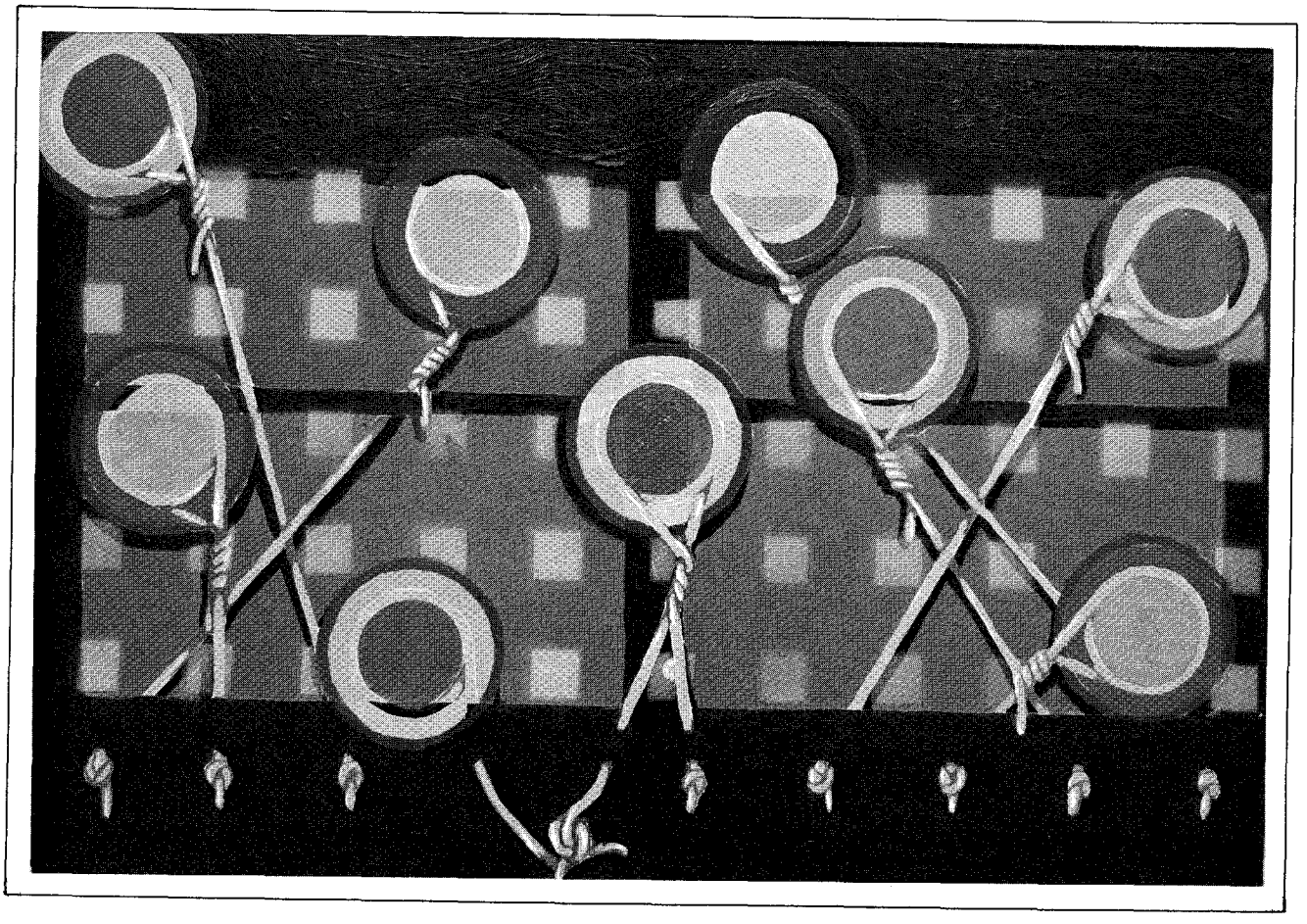
SUNDAY HOSTAGES

CLAIRE ZUCKERMAN



Whenever I think about a certain year in my childhood, I see an enormous white claw-footed bathtub. It looms in my memory, a ghostly reminder of our first apartment, the dreary railroad flat to which my mother, my sister, and I moved from our house in Brooklyn after my parents separated.

The size of that bathtub intimidated us. It stood in the middle of the cavernous kitchen like an ocean liner in drydock, its sides too steep and slippery for us to scale without help from my mother's arms. A kind of cupboard had been constructed around it, a painted wooden palisade just high enough to preserve modesty. My little sister Floss cried the first time she was lowered into it, and no wonder. She wanted to splash in that other tub in the peach and green tiled room with swans gliding across its curtained window, in our sunny house in Brooklyn. "Why can't we go home, mommy?" she wailed.

The reason was that my mother had decided she couldn't take any more of my father and his

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boorish family. The news had come as a surprise to us. Floss and I, being very young, were still enjoying that children's paradise in which everyone and everything around us seemed to have been placed on earth solely for our comfort and delight.

My parents had preserved our innocence, according to the custom of the time, by having their quarrels behind closed doors after we had gone to bed. One night we were frightened out of our dreams by loud noises, hoarse shouting in voices we couldn't recognize, then a scream, a door slamming. The next morning my mother, her eyes swollen and a bluish bruise on her cheek, told us not to worry, my father would never have a chance to strike her again; we were moving out. When my father's rage had cooled and he came home a few days later to accept my mother's forgiveness, she was already packed.

My mother was impulsive. Once she got an idea in her head, she would be off and running without a backward look into the brightly colored landscape of her imagining. Cause and effect were a mystery to her; she was blind to consequences. (Still, she was right about that particular impulse; it was hard to like my father's family.) She must have been thirty years old when she left my father, but I think of her as younger. I remember her as round and soft, like a pillow, and beautiful in an old-fashioned way. She had immense brown eyes, dark wavy hair, and the prettiest smile, soft curved lips and pearly teeth. Her voice had a lilt even when she was feeling discouraged.

Her timing was off, as always. Nineteen-thirty-four was not a good year for a woman with two small children to start an independent life as an artist. Surely even she must have noticed that most people were having trouble managing any sort of life at all, much less the one she had chosen. I marvel that anyone as ill-equipped to deal with the practical side of life as my mother was then had the courage to set off for the unknown the way she did. Once she had made up her mind, she showed a determination that was striking in such a gentle person. Having made her declaration of independence, she shortened her name from Lillian to Lila to give herself courage and, banners flying, installed the three of us in that dingy flat in Greenwich Village.

Only the living room at its front end and the rear bedroom that Floss and I shared had windows; the cubicle where my mother slept, and the amorphous space that combined front hall, kitchen, and bathing facility were shrouded in a perpetual twilight. Each week my mother wrestled the furniture into a different arrangement, but she never achieved a homey effect. No matter where she put them, the pleated chiffon lampshades had the air of refugees, while the red leather Morris chair evoked my father. The beds and chests were on too grand a scale for the rooms; Floss and I learned to move carefully in that forest of maple and mahogany to avoid bruises. At night the shrieking Sixth Avenue El cars jarred us awake. I muffled my tears in my pillow so my mother wouldn't hear them.

CLAIRE ZUCKERMAN has lived in or near New York City, "my home town," all her life. This is her first published story.

In the first months of our exile, I visited Brooklyn every night. I planted nasturtiums under the trellised rosebush in our garden; or I sat in front of the cuckoo clock in the playroom and listened to the click-whir of the pendulum, waiting for the little bird to pop out. My dreams were a kinder reality than the roach-infested toilet at the end of the long dark hall.

My father sold the house in Brooklyn and moved into a midtown hotel near his brother's coat factory, where he worked as a pattern maker. Perhaps the idea of confining himself in such an impersonal space originated as a clumsy bid for my mother's sympathy. I can't believe he intended to spend the rest of his life in that solitary room. It was one of those temporary arrangements that somehow endure. When he left the hotel nine years later, it was in an ambulance. The next move after that was to the cemetery.

He came to see us every Sunday. The bell in the downstairs hall would ring three times, the signal that he had arrived and we were to be delivered to him. He tapped his foot on the sidewalk in front of the building while my mother groomed us. A few quick strokes of the comb tidied Floss's Dutch bob; then it was my turn to squirm in front of the kitchen sink. As she wound my hair into sausage curls around her finger, she gave me my instructions for the day. So many things to remember!

"Tell your father you need new shoes. Don't let him feed you all that junk in the movies; you got sick the last time, remember. And don't let him know we have visitors; it's none of his business. Estelle, look after Flossie, she's your baby sister."

When the bell summoned us again, she eased us into the hall and hugged us goodbye. My mother watched at the window until she saw us come out the front door and greet my father with prim little kisses.

The thud of the apartment door closing behind us reverberates down the years. There we are, Floss and I, standing alone on the landing. She tugs at the elastic band of her sailor hat; I give a hitch to my garter belt. I take my sister's hand. "Come on, Flossie. Daddy's waiting. Hold tight to the bannister."

We walk slowly down the stairs, two hostages crossing the no man's land between my mother's world and my father's. Floss is five years old, her hair is still baby-blond, her cheeks are as round and smooth as apples. I am nine, small for my age, skinny, knobby-kneed, wary. I sigh as I push the street door open, thinking of the long day ahead of us.

My father does not smile at us. His handsome face under the carefully combed black hair seems always to be scowling. I read his expression as disapproval, unable to imagine that this weekly ritual could be humiliating for him, too. He holds out his immaculately groomed hands and we each take one. We are always polite and formal with each other, like strangers. A familiar knot coils and tightens under my breastbone.

If we're lucky, this will be one of the good days. We'll ride uptown on the bus, take in a movie at the Music Hall, have a really good time playing "Open, Sesame" with the little glass windows at the Automat, deal a few hands of

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rummy in my father's hotel room—a painless way to get through the afternoon. To make conversation, we can talk about Deanna Durbin or Shirley Temple in the movie we've just seen, a favorite pastime of mine (their happy endings give substance to my own secret dreams). Or, we can compare the relative merits of the Automat's chocolate ice cream and its frosted cupcakes, Floss's preferred topic. On those days there are no awkward silences.

We're not lucky. Today we don't go to the bus stop; we slow down at the subway entrance. Floss and I look glumly at each other; we know this means we're going to Brooklyn to visit my father's brother. We'll be imprisoned all afternoon in a brick fortress in Flatbush, and I'll have to pick my way through a minefield of probing questions and pointed remarks. There is nothing soft or subtle about anyone in that family. I must always be on my guard. My mother has warned us that we could wind up living with my father and those people if we're careless with certain information.

But what information? I think money has something to do with it. We're always short of money, even though my mother has been able to earn a few dollars a week doing secretarial work. The janitor's wife has been keeping an eye on us after school. She's really nice, but she's usually too busy to take us to the park. Sometimes she comes up to our apartment after supper to stay with us when my mother goes to the Art Students' League. I wonder if it's the money for art lessons that's causing all this trouble between my parents. If only my mother would explain everything to us straight out, instead of making all those strange contradictory remarks.

I'm still puzzling over her most recent outburst. Just this morning, while ladling out our Wheatena, she snapped, "Ask him how I'm supposed to feed and clothe two children on ten dollars a week!" She sounded so angry, not only at my father, but at us, too. Floss and I didn't know what to say. We just stared at her with our mouths full of cereal. Hadn't she reminded us only the night before that no matter how badly my father had treated her, she was not one to deprive him of his children's love and respect? Hadn't she told us to get down on our knees and ask God to bless our father? Praying for him like that made me feel sick to my stomach, as if I were telling a lie.

How many times she has said to us, "Remember, you're his children as well as mine." If we are my father's children, too, why are we living in one place and he in another?

As we walk up the front stoop of my uncle's house, I brace myself, knowing what to expect. Aunt Becky will stuff us with chicken; Uncle Morris will make spiteful remarks about our scuffed shoes and dangling buttons. Floss will be petted and pampered; her chubbiness marks her as one of them—she's their ideal of beauty. I will be pinched and clucked over, my sallow skin and bony arms seized on as proof of my mother's neglect.

Today starts out like all the other visits. Uncle Morris chuckles slyly at me, "So, your mother is too busy to feed you. She must be working day and night, eh, Aaron?"

He winks at my father. I have learned early that Uncle Morris is the enemy, so I try to steer the conversation away from our wicked city life. Aunt Becky appears with a steaming platter and announces that dinner is ready, we'd better not let it get cold.

Floss and I are trapped at the mammoth dining room table, the tablecloth stretching in front of us as white and vast as the Russian steppes. Our fat cousins gobble second helpings, then watch greedily as we swallow each mouthful. Floss is sitting on a couple of phone books which bring her chin level with the edge of her dinner plate. Aunt Becky heaps potatoes on our dishes with a gargantuan spoon. "Eat, eat," she urges. "You won't get another meal like this in a hurry." The truth of her remark and the deliciousness of the food grapple painfully with my humiliation. I eat very slowly to keep from gagging.

My father hunches morosely at the other end of the table next to his older brother. They tear bread and stuff it into their mouths, washing it down with seltzer. My father speaks in loud nervous bursts, ignoring Aunt Becky's pointed glances in our direction. "I can't understand it, Morris. What does she want? I gave her a nice home, plenty of food on the table, everything the best. Two lovely children. Look at those poor kids. How could she do this to them?" The tears roll down his face. Morris belches.

My cousin Shirley knocks over her glass of cherry soda. Slap. Scream. Shirley's mouth is always open, in an endless round of eating, screaming, crying. She even sleeps with her mouth open. My cousin Eli leers at me. He's only eleven, but precocious. "Come on up to my room. I'll show you my stamp collection. How about it, Essie?"

"Estelle is my name, remember?" I force myself to smile. "No, thanks." Eli's hands are sweaty and he has bad breath. I think fast. "Let's play Parcheesi. We can teach Floss and Shirley."

Eli thinks Parcheesi is kid stuff and is about to say so. Aunt Becky reads him an ultimatum with her eyes, underlines it by saying his name with that rising inflection that makes disobedience a crime too terrible to risk. He makes a face, then grumbles, "Oh, all right."

I remember that I'm to ask my father for new shoes, but hesitate to bring the subject up in front of Uncle Morris. I hang around, watching for a chance to speak to my father alone. After Sunday dinner, Morris sometimes takes a nap. Today, he pulls a deck of cards out of the sideboard and invites his brother to try to beat him at pinochle. I'll have to talk to my father later.

I glide into the parlor for a glimpse of the only beautiful thing in my uncle's house, the Persian rug that glows like the breast of a peacock. "Out! Out!" shrieks Aunt Becky from the kitchen. "You'll dirty the carpet with those shoes of yours. Go play on the sun porch."

We kids set up our game of Parcheesi. The minutes tick by. Eli is cheating but I pretend not to notice; I have more important things on my mind. The sun's rays slant lower and redder through the windows. This endless afternoon will soon be over. It's now or never. I stand up.

"Sore loser!" taunts Eli. "Where ya going, Essie?"

I bite back the smart retort he's been trying to provoke all day. "Where do you think?"

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I tiptoe toward the front parlor, looking for my father. The door to the dining room is open. He and Uncle Morris are still sitting at the dining room table with their backs to me, a bottle of schnapps between them. Aunt Becky is standing at the sideboard wiping silver. They're talking about my mother. I freeze and hold my breath. My father is speaking. His voice sounds funny, almost like Eli's. I flatten myself against the doorpost and listen.

"But Morris, how could I do that to my own children? It isn't right to make them do without, if I have the money."

A shrill voice breaks in: Aunt Becky. "Right? Right? Was it right of her to walk out on you? Did that tramp think of the children then?"

I am stunned. My mother has told us that the ragged men we see sleeping on benches in Washington Square Park are tramps. What does Aunty Becky mean, calling my mother a tramp? I always feel a shiver of fear when I see those pitiful men. A spasm passes through me now.

"How could you call her a tramp?" my father shouts. "My God, she's no stranger to you. How could you say that?"

"Would a respectable woman leave her husband and go live in Greenwich Village with all those—Bohemians?" Becky rattles silver. A drawer slams. "What do you think she's doing, drawing pictures of naked men—"

"Becky, shut up!" Morris roars. My skin prickles. Something is about to be decided in that room, something to do with Floss and me. Morris goes on in his bullying growl, "Aaron, it's up to you. Do you want her back, or not? How long do you think she can hold out on her own? She's got her head in the clouds; she's no manager like Becky. If you give in now, you'll only encourage her to keep on with this foolishness."

"You think she'll give it up that easily? You don't know Lily."

"Are you a man, or not? Are you going to let her call the tune? If you do, you'll regret it."

"It's easy for you to talk. You're not living alone, doing for yourself. Maybe if I tried to make it up with her . . ."

"You asked for my advice. Here it is. You want your wife back? Don't give her the money."

Silence. My heart is beating so loudly I wonder that they don't hear it. Then, my father's voice, so low I can barely make out the words. "I guess you're right."

I must have made a noise just then because my father calls out sharply, "Who's there?"

I step into the doorway and try to make my face smooth, as if I haven't heard anything. He looks at me sorrowfully for a minute, then his face screws up into a scowl. "What do you want?"

I look at the two men in their shirtsleeves, the cards and silver scattered on the table, the two glasses and the half-empty bottle. That's the moment to run into the room and throw my arms around my father, as Shirley Temple would have, and cry, "Please come back to us, Daddy. We love you. We want to be a family again." It always worked in the movies, a big finale, tears all around, everyone hugging each other and saying what fools they'd been. But I know better now, and I ask my father, very slowly and politely, to please take us home. □

MARK DEFOE

STORY

He watched from his window in that small town
the pregnant girl ironing, clad
only in her bra and slip.
Her one arm a steady stroking
in the sultry air, one hand resting
quiet on her belly, she stood ironing
clad only in her bra and slip.

A moving calm, she glided in the tongs of heat,
carrying two books on secretarial science.
She walked to classes at the college,
tenderly she walked to classes.

He never spoke, afraid to tip
her brimful cup, or muss that hair drawn back
so cleanly. Clod, he told himself, don't jar
her earth with your heavy tread,
afraid he'd tip that cup where she floated
a bud about to burst in glory.

Then suddenly curtains fluttered,
a stereo, a washer-dryer.
She soaked up sun in an orange bikini.
From his window the lawn became the beach
at Rio, the surf at Malibu. And suddenly
in her window curtains fluttered prettily.

Now when he passed, her painted toes
wriggled like purple-headed grubs.
Between her thick breasts lingered oily sweat,
and movie magazines splashed the lawn.
Now when he passed, he saw in them
page after page of smiles, rippled by the wind.

From behind her curtains came the see-saw
wail of the child. His roommate flipped
his Zippo, smirking blue clouds. They drank,
the afternoons caved in, slurring towards
the late night talk shows and from behind
her curtains, the creaking wail of the child.

Later, he would recall this girl as beautiful,
this as the summer of almost becoming,
in that small town, the kindest of fathers.
He would recall, never wondering,
even when he was wiser,
who it was she ironed for.

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Linda Vozar

Undercurrents

All during the six months Frankie and Marshall lived in California, they made plans for what they would do when they returned to New Mexico. On weekends when Marshall wasn't teaching photography at UCLA and Frankie wasn't studying from her Italian lesson book—*Panorama Italiano,* they drove to places like the Watts Towers and the Huntington Gallery and Library. They wandered through giant cactus gardens with the other tourists, filling their heads with ideas for landscaping Marshall's place. The potential of his adobe property was great, and he had made it clear to Frankie that when they returned, she must feel that the place was hers also. Frankie began calling it their little rancho deluxe. Together they could really turn the place into something great, he told her.

Frankie longed to return to New Mexico, but never let on to Marshall just how much she missed the place. She wrote letters to Terri, her best friend in New Mexico—letters that began "Carissima Terri," outpouring her deepest feelings, many of which were never shared with Marshall. California had not lived up to her expectations—but things seldom did—she was learning. The place was overrated, "like the real estate," she wrote in one letter to Terri. And not exactly the cream of the crop lived in their neighborhood. The sight of the blind bag lady playing the accordion with the tin cup attached was enough to make her weep, and also to make her begin saving for retirement. Perhaps she could find someone to nominate her into the Independent Order of Foresters. They were one big happy, retired family. Didn't Terri belong, she wondered? The thought of being alone and poor in her old age devastated her. Certainly she should start planning now for the great deal of security she would need later.

"Make your money work for you," said Ruth, Marshall's friend whose apartment they sublet for six months. "Investments are the only way to go." She talked fast as she gathered up a few things she'd forgotten the last time she was in town. "Make your money multiply. I never plan to worry about money."

If living in California had taught Frankie one thing, it was to make a solid investment with her small fortune (it was two thousand dollars) as soon as she returned to New Mexico. Marshall wanted to invest too—and he had a good deal more to invest. He talked about buying cheap real estate and then reselling after a year or two at a considerable profit. This sounded good to Frankie. Real estate was more tangible than the stock market, anyway. But it was all rather abstract and didn't really interest her, although she wanted very much to be part of an investment. One she could share with Marshall.

"When we get back to New Mexico," Frankie said, one evening in April, "we should invest in some real estate." She stood over the sink peeling cucumbers.

"Yes," agreed Marshall, spooning round hunks of watermelon into a glass dish. Curls hung around his head like a crown, still wet from a shower. He was bare-chested and tan. "Hell, all we can lose is money."

"You mean all we can gain is money," corrected Frankie. She did not understand this vacillating manner of Marshall's, which irritated her and made her wonder if she would ever marry him. Did he think they *would* lose money in real estate? Or did he take it for granted that they *could* lose money, but so what!

"I can live below a freeway underpass like a bum if I have to," he said, jokingly. "And I know you'd like it there too."

"Who needs all that sunshine and smog? I'd rather live under the pier," she responded with sarcasm, but wondered if he wasn't serious.

After dinner, in her white gym shorts and blue cotton spaghetti-strapped t-shirt, Frankie walked along the beach, four blocks from the apartment. Old people were everywhere, silhouetted against the Pacific with Catalina Island in the distance where she and Marshall had visited the previous weekend. Implanted firmly in her memory was the coastline there, the exotic smells of wild flowers and eucalyptus groves. In her next letter to Terri she would have to admit that she would miss weekends on Catalina, even though she'd only visited it once. Perhaps when we get to be old ladies, Frankie thought, we'll retire in California together where the climate is moderate year round.

During their one phone conversation in six months, Frankie confided in Terri intimately. With them in it together, the future seemed happy. Terri agreed. And when things went well between Marshall and Frankie, the future also seemed happy. They made plans for its arrival. They even discussed having a child. Which was another reason to invest. If she *were* ever going to have a baby, they'd have to be able to afford it. Neither of them should have to work for the rest of their lives just because they wanted to have a child, Frankie thought, in her very practical and foolish way. Besides, she thought again, she couldn't imagine herself with a child just yet. She was only twenty-six.

Weekly Frankie wrote letters, and with the same pace, Terri replied. One night when Frankie had insomnia, she sat up by candlelight at the kitchen table writing long letters to everyone she thought might like to hear from her, while Marshall slept soundly down the hall. With irregular frequency she corresponded with all her friends, but next to the love letters she once had exchanged with Marshall, none were as dear as those she received from Terri. She saved them all—bound together with a fat rubber band, stacked neatly in the order of their arrival, in the top drawer of her dresser.

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As the time came closer and closer to June, when Marshall's job would end at UCLA and they were due back in New Mexico, Terri's letters came further and further apart. Frankie mailed her postcards from the final highlights of Southern California: Greetings from The San Diego Zoo, San Juan Capistrano, Universal Studio Tours and Hollywood.

On the way back to New Mexico they spent the night in Ashe Fork, Arizona. Marshall wanted to document what he thought had to be America's final frontier. It was beyond his imagination that such places still existed. From the green backpack he lifted his Nikon. The reality of Los Angeles was shedding itself from his memory already. Luckily, he had thoroughly documented that place too.

"Why don't we get a document of marriage?" teased Frankie, as she watched Marshall click off pictures of the Ludlow Hotel from the window of the red Datsun pickup. They took a tiny room at the end of the long empty hallway. The woman at the desk mumbled in Spanish, handed Marshall the key, and pointed up the stairs. On the thin metal-framed daybed, Frankie and Marshall made love splendidly. No evening on the edge of the final frontier had ever been better.

The next night when they came within twenty miles of Marshall's house, Frankie began to sing, *Home, Home on the Range.* Then she tapped her heels together like Dorothy in Oz, repeating, "There's no place like home. There's no place like home."

"Pretty corny, Frankie," teased Marshall, pinching the tender spot above her knee.

When they arrived at the edge of town, Marshall pulled into the dirt driveway of The Hitching Post. A blue neon light blinked wildly and circled the top of the roof. The sign on the door said Remove Your Hat.

"I forgot all about this place," said Frankie, as they entered. Live music played loudly from a smoky corner as couples spun like tops on the dance floor. At a small table with a red candle burning from the center, they ordered margaritas. The band started a slow tune and they rose to dance, caressing like honeymooners clasped in the two-step. Marshall led her in a circular pattern around the dance floor, kissing the back of her neck. At closing time they danced to the car and drove home. Frankie dreamt of her conversation with Terri in the morning, as Marshall put clean sheets on the bed. He kissed her lips as he undressed her and then tucked her in bed with loving-kindness.

After breakfast, when Marshall returned from the T.G. & Y. store with floor wax, Frankie left for Terri's house. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Terri's small head at the front door as she pulled into the driveway. Frankie tooted the horn. Terri jumped up and down, hooting.

"Carissima," cried Frankie, hugging her friend. Arm in arm they looked each other over.

"You look good," said Terri.

"No, you look good. I look fat," said Frankie.

"Look at me," said Terri, slapping the sides of her arms and pinching up and down. "Fat as a cow."

"Whenever I got depressed in California, I ate M&M's. But you look good."

"Come in, I'll give you something dietetic," said Terri.

Frankie sat down at the table and leaned forward intimately, reaching for Terri. "How I've missed you! You're the first person I've talked to in months," she said desperately. And then laughed at the possibility of being taken seriously.

"How's Marshall?" asked Terri, pouring iced tea into two cups.

"Fine. He wants to buy some real estate," said Frankie, but found herself not wanting to talk about it.

"With you?" she asked, raising her brow.

"I guess," she shrugged. "Hey, you look great. I thought how you and I could retire in California together when we get to be old ladies."

"When is that?" chided Terri.

"Later on," said Frankie, wondering if she was about to be turned down. "Don't you belong to the Independent Order of Foresters?"

"Sort of, but I dropped out. Why? You want to be nominated?"

"Sort of, but I'd probably drop out. Hey you want to get a pizza at Eddie's tonight?"

"Sorry. I've got plans to see Val."

"Who's Val?"

"A new friend. I met her at an art opening. She's a ceramist."

Frankie twinged but continued to talk. "How's your business?" Terri worked for herself as a production potter.

"Okay. About the same. Actually, I'm bored to death," replied Terri, looking bored. "But it's bread on the table and pays the rent, so what can I say?"

"Show me your garden," Frankie said.

Outside Terri lifted the hose from the dry dirt and walked between the tall salt weeds. Behind her, Frankie carried the iced tea and sat on the edge of the woodpile, watching Terri water the leafy rows of her garden. Terri pulled up some spinach and munched vigorously.

"Great stuff," she said, handing some to Frankie, and squirting her with the hose. Frankie ran to the faucet to turn off the water, but Terri chased her into the house. In the living room, Terri shouted, "Let's hear some music," as she lifted the needle on to the groove of the record. A harmonic blare sounded from the speakers, and Terri began dancing to the Stevie Wonder album. She brushed her short dark hair off her forehead and blew a kiss to Frankie. They danced all the old favorites—the swim, the monkey, the twist. Laughing, they did the jerk, and then jumped up and down on the carpet like children at a birthday party.

"Do you like this music?" asked Terri.

"I like you," said Frankie.

The music faded and Terri collapsed on the sofa. A slow song came on. "May I have this dance?" asked Frankie, reaching for Terri's hand. Terri rose from the sofa and wrapped her bare arms around Frankie. Frankie closed her eyes and led Terri around the room in a slow circle, and thought, after all, she was practically married, and out of Terri's reach. □

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THE WOMAN WHO WOULD NOT STAY HOME

NANCY POTTER

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For some the first memory is a pony's wet muzzle finding the sugar cube, an arm socket being pulled as some out-of-sight giant snatches one's hand, a design on the bedroom wallpaper, the poor burned foot under the spilled hot water amid the shouts, "I told you! I warned you!" Loretta Huff's first memory was all motion, the loose sway of the yellow trolley, green branches coming in the windows, the backs of her knees pricked by the shellacked straw seat. Her mother is only a plaid rayon skirt. Ret flinches a little at the branches, but otherwise she stares steadily ahead at the conductor's cap in the center of the narrowing green tunnel until they reach the river and then race the water itself, black water carrying scraps of wood, old tires. She holds the token with its cutout design she can already recognize, until it is time to put it into the conductor's hand. Her mother's voice goes on and on.

At four she is taken by bus to kindergarten. The steps are high but she pulls herself up and falls into the seat behind the driver, her legs stretched out from the warm leather settee. In her fierce fist is clasped the red circus car box of animal crackers. The driver smokes a big cigar and shouts at the big boys in the back. "I can see you. You'll walk home if you do that again." The boys make faces back at him. Since she can not yet read, and there are many buses in front of the school, she is supposed to look for Donald Duck's picture on the windshield. When it is not there one day, she rides all afternoon through strange country. She will not tell them who she is, until her father comes to pick her up at the dispatcher's office. "She'll go anywhere on wheels."

In fifth grade, Loretta, in plaid pleated dress made over from her mother's best skirt, goes on a school trip to Rocky Point. It is June and they ride on a real bus with the two nuns up front in the first seat. The windows are open. The hot plush seat itches. Her silk socks creep down and her lacquered curls escape their stiff shells. Hurdy-gurdy music and barkers fight for the air. Loretta touches the dollar bill in her pocket. "Spend carefully," her father told her. She puts the money on the roller coaster (5 rides), dodge 'em cars (3 rides), a candied apple, a hot dog, and some spun sugar. Cecile LeBeuf and Jimmy Pepin go into the Tunnel of Love. The nuns wait for them at the exit. Jimmy's face is covered with Cecile's lipstick. The nuns pull them apart.

Loretta puts her last nickel in the fortune telling machine. Inside the glass cubicle a stuffed gypsy woman bends over some playing cards in a dumb show. A slip of paper shoots out: "You will go far." Loretta takes a last ride on the roller coaster and throws up as they get into the bus. Her dress is wrinkled and stained, but she is still grinning. "What did you expect? You got overtired," says her mother.

The CYO holds three bake sales and five car washes and sells three hundred pounds of stale chocolate bars to pay for the overnight trip to New York. She pretends that she has been on many trains before, but she runs through all the cars opening the heavy doors and waiting for them to thunk shut. The conductor shouts, "Take it easy. Slow down. Where do you think you're going?" The other kids are reading comic books. She sits in the smoking section, then goes into the dining car. She orders coffee, which she does not like, and she holds the paper cup, pretending that she is bored, staring sadly out at the dark brick buildings. "You look like a sick cat," her best friend says. In the city, they ride up and down on the hotel elevators, lock themselves out of their room, smell the little cakes of hotel soap, hide from their frantic chaperone. They stand in line in the snow at Radio City and spend all their change at the Automat, positioning their glasses under the milk spigot and watching the sandwiches in the glass boxes move toward them. Loretta stands on tiptoe reaching for a subway strap, as she feels a hand touching her thigh but does not call out or tell anyone about it. She watches a funny faced man picking a black banana peel out of a gutter. She sees words she has only heard in the playground spelled out on the walls of buildings they pass. On the return train trip, while the others sleep, she stands on the platform smelling the rank odor rising from the tracks and feeling the vibrating wheels through the floor. She has a headache for three days afterward. She is high strung, they say. It is worth it, and she has a notebook full of her own impressions.

At eighteen Loretta is sitting in a bright orange office with twenty other girls all selling princess phones on time to welfare families. The girls are always celebrating something: engagements, babies, the end of Lent, Valentine's Day, anniversaries. Loretta thinks most about summer

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NANCY POTTER'S collection, We Have Seen the Best of Our Times, *was published by Knopf. She teaches at the University of Rhode Island.*

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vacation. All winter she collects brochures from a travel agent and looks at pictures of palm trees, stockyards, New Orleans, the Rainbow Room. Her best friend, Evelyn, at the next desk, has gone with her to Rye Beach, to the Pennsylvania Dutch country, and to Washington, D.C.

They are not devout, but they take an excursion pilgrimage to Quebec because it is a good value, long and cheap. Except for one husband and a priest, only women are on the dinky old bus, chugging up the pine covered mountains in a cloud of exhaust fumes. At St. Anne de Beaupré they stay, dormitory style, in a brown hotel—linoleum, walls, wicker furniture, all brown. Winter is waiting to take over their room. Eight women unlace their pink corsets slowly, showing chunky thighs exploding in varicose veins. They change their bunion pads and take milk of magnesia. They wipe their forks with their clean linen handkerchiefs before they begin to eat. They also wipe the toilet seats before sitting.

A fat priest smiles too much at Ret when she buys medals. Everything smells of burned roast and chicory. She sits on the porch and writes big on the post cards, hoping that they will reach home before she does. She goes into the basilica and touches the crutches, braces, canes, and even an old truss strapped to the columns. A crazy man, whose family hopes for his cure, has been left in the basement of the Redemptorist monastery. Through the bars he sticks his tongue out at her, and then thumbs his nose. She turns her back.

The best part is the nightly candlelight procession up the terraced hill past life-sized Stations of the Cross. Flickering tapers illuminate bronze Roman soldiers holding whips, Jews spitting, Pilate sneering, the tired backs of the women gathered under the cross. Ret weeps at her own goodness, imagines herself a barefoot pilgrim on a crusade, but before that will be the return bus trip through Quebec (lunch stop), the Eastern townships (tea and souvenir shopping), and overnight in Portland, Maine.

Evelyn will not kiss the relic case, for fear of germs, or climb the Scala Santa on her knees, for fear of ruining her stockings. She is a careful girl, but at Falmouth the next summer she wears a bathing suit without a skirt and encourages a shy telephone lineman to take advantage after two rum Cokes. The lineman gives her a multi-faceted diamond, with wedding bands thrown in free. Ret gives her a kitchen shower and catches the bouquet.

In her mid-twenties, Loretta is still living at home with her parents, familiar monuments who doze on the couch after supper. They have nothing to fight about and collaborate in advice to her: "You'll be an old maid living with a hundred cats in some tenement. You'll go queer, stuffing money under the rug, keeping your dirty underwear in greasy shopping bags. Find someone. Look, your friends have all taken the plunge."

On a singles weekend at a big hotel on Lake Placid she meets Kenny Huff. They are partnered on the treasure hunt but find nothing on their list except each other. He swallows a lot, trying to get rid of a lump in his throat that she can see moving up and down. He smells of Lifebuoy soap and Listerine. Weekends she now spends at a gravel pit, watching him fly elaborate model airplanes. He likes her to stand beside him. She expects the little planes to do more, crash or take off for more remote destinations, but they only buzz and sputter in small circles. After three windy, wet Sundays she tells him that she will have to do her laundry on Sundays.

But they are "an item." She practices writing his name after hers, thinks of them pushing a fat baby in a stroller or standing in the A&P checkout line. She can not imagine him snoring in bed beside her. They frighten each other by excessive demands. Can you make banana cream pie or grapenut pudding? Would you love me if I go bald? Will we have enough to talk about? What will happen if my teeth fall out?

She knows that he hates to travel. Their honeymoon is spent in a tropical paradise. They land at night after a delayed flight and are driven at sixty miles an hour up a winding mountain road, just missing burros and basket sellers. There has been an earthquake and the plumbing still does not work well. Precociously old girl-women brush the beach with straw brooms. Kenny has a queasy stomach that sours at lipstick on a coffe cup and seafood at the next table. He will wind up on cornflakes and soft boiled eggs. He lies in the room memorizing the schedule of return flights and executing roaches. As soon as he nods off, she tiptoes to the balcony to listen to the marimba band and to smell the tacos.

Soon there are two children. She expects their real mother to enter the house, or, more frightening, for them to slide off the road some night as Ken is driving them to pick her up at some terminus and for their car to explode in flames, tumbling down an incline, no one surviving, confirming her singleness. The children prefer Ken, of course. He takes them to the Dairy Queen, plays Chinese Checkers with them and holds them close while he pulls magic objects from their pockets. They are in awe of her, becoming silent when she appears. They treat her like a somewhat dangerously powerful stranger. Some of their best conversations are while they wait for buses to take her away or for her luggage to appear on the carousel. She remembers these intense times, rather than the spaces between.

She works in a city an hour away and is in a car pool. People sympathize with her over the distance she commutes, but she does not tell them that the drive is the best part of every day for her, especially the blizzards, ice, fogs, car breakdowns, traffic jams. Their last house is all Ken's. He is so serious about perc tests and fiberglass insulation that others consult him. He knows in advance where the sun will fall into each room and he selects every fireplace brick. She is as respectful as an uninvited guest soon to be found out. She tiptoes a lot and tries not to make much noise.

On her vacations she flies to Florida where her old parents have moved. Ken stays home with the children. She nudges him toward association with other warm-blooded folk. Everywhere are untroubled women who would make better wives for such a wholesome man. Once, when they are sitting in the departure lounge at

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Logan, she tells him plain out, "You shouldn't have to put up with this. You deserve better." He replies, "It's all right. You're fine. I don't mind."

She travels to avoid breaking things. If she moves quickly enough she will leave no traces, ruffle no surface, give no offense. People are nicer to you if you're not underfoot all the time. You become slightly more interesting upon reappearance. No one is noticing, but you act as if someone is. If she lasts long enough and is in the right place by chance, she may bisect something important.

For all her worry, the children grow up and marry, one in the backyard, the other in a Baptist chapel, with her dreaming away, abstractly there. But Ken does, in a sense, die alone, in the VA hospital. No one would tell her of what. "General wear and tear," the chief resident keeps saying. She can be depended upon to visit often, although it is hard keeping her mind on his dying. She composes an apology, "I'm sorry about being away so much. It is something that comes over me, I don't know what." He whispers back, "Don't worry, Ret. You just like to gallivant. I don't blame you. You'll be free now. Well fixed." She is, astonishingly. She never travels up to her resources, as a matter of principle.

In the company of other widows, she does the usual shrines: Knock, Lourdes, Fatima, the Rue Bac, Guadalope, Rome, LaSalette. Once the spiritual routine is over, they may concentrate on food. They are authorities on buffets, smorgasbords, and brunches. They especially like hot breads and dessert trays and they carry calorie counters in their purses. Ret leaves their company for her own.

"Travel broadens," her mother observed, but Ret grows thinner and thinner. She also becomes more silent and more wise. She thinks she is storing experience. When she sees a painting of St. John eating the gospel, she understands immediately. If I were a book, I could be read. Someone needs what I know or can be persuaded to with a little effort. I may die of accumulated wisdom. In my head all this moving about must come to something if strung on a wire.

If she could select one face or one room she might make sense out of the whole. Hard as she works to select one, it always flows into another view or theme. Looking through her notebook, she confronts fragments. A page of her name translated into various alphabets—Cyrillic, Greek, Arabic, Hindi, Hebrew. A group of phrases—thank you, goodbye, you are kind, I want a single room, where is the washroom? I am thirsty.

She is always running into other nuts who are chasing something and letting it drop through their fingers so they have to start all over again. Some fancy a preoccupation with bird migrations or state capitol domes or topiary or chili. Some have no purpose at all. Once she was directed to share a table in a vast hotel dining room in Kiev with a man who was driving across Europe and Asia, barely reaching each night's stop to which he had been routed, endlessly worried about strange road signs, holding the map with trembling hands and magnifying glass, running out of gas in towns where he wasn't expected, encountering police who shouted. "I'm scared all the time," he confessed to Ret. "My wife won't come with me after nearly dying on the PanAmerican Highway and being shot at in Afghanistan. I have to do it alone."

On a park bench in Canberra, an American with an ordinary sounding name told her he checked telephone directories everywhere in the world to find anyone who spelled it his way. So far, no luck. He had, as far as he could discover, no family. "Isn't that statistically impossible?" she asked him. "Maybe. But it seems true in my case." She left the bench.

She is especially interested in graves and burial chambers. Her people may be there in the bone pits and scraps. Next to those, she likes the homes of the great and the nearly great.

Occasionally she is distracted by her companions, like the woman from Kansas who always traveled with a ¾ life sized inflatable dummy, dressed in her late husband's cut-down pajamas. Ret would not have known about the dummy if they had not been forced by a room shortage to share one night in Ankara, and there she was blowing up the dummy and explaining that she hated to sleep alone.

On a Trailways bus out of Memphis once, Ret saw boarding a tall, white-haired man in denim robes and a huge wooden cross and carrying a brown burlap bag. Before going to the back of the bus he said quite clearly, "Have a good heart."

The summer she is fifty-three, she stands in the public library nervously staring at the classifieds in a journal. Sure no one is looking, she copies down "Lonely SWM, 56, fond cats, non-smoker, madrigal singer, seeks compatible traveler in realms of gold." She will not hold the cats or the madrigals against him, and she is not sure where the realms are, but she telephones the number from a phone booth. When they meet as agreed at the Capri Diner in Peapack, he seems fine, and they plan a trial run to Peru, four days including Machu Picchu. On the plane after drinking his lunch, he is airsick all the way to Lima. She rather enjoys playing the nurse's role in the Savoy Hotel until he comes at her with a broken bottle. On the return flight he sits in an aisle seat, pawing at the stewardess, and she sits at the window, holding the baby of the woman in the middle. Of course, she never sees him again but wonders about the madrigals.

She watches occasional romance cynically. In one rainy November in Kashmir she sees a widow from Brooklyn fall in love with the owner of their dingy little houseboat, a sad-faced Moslem who constantly scratches himself under his heavy robe. "I know you think I'm crazy," she tells Ret. "But he's the first man who's smiled at me in eight years. I'll stay as long as my money holds out." In the cook boat they can see his young wife and several children. Someone was always picking up with someone, and it never seemed to come out right. Two women begin sharing a cabin on the South Seas cruise at Pago Pago. By Hong Kong they are throwing drinks into each other's face. That came of expecting the wrong things out of travel.

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By now Ret's native element has become motion. She is titillated by the extremes of the days, beginnings and ends. She loves awakening in strange bedrooms, reaching her feet to the floor, always a little cold. Amazing how cold the early mornings are even in deserts and the tropics. Then as she waits for coffee, even if it turns out badly, another surge of confidence. And from late afternoon on, another safe time, swaying into a strange city from the airport amid decent people going home from work, safe at last. She also enjoys driving late at night, the feeble beams of the car or taxi picking up mysterious glints of new places—a portico, an alley, an empty store with the smell of an olive wood fire and goat bells tossing restlessly. Her fellow travelers would be sitting silent and hopeful in the dark space while the driver took them to their guaranteed beds.

At sixty she begins to favor the northern cities over Venetian spretzatura or soft nights in Spain. She no longer takes moonlight carriages with other American widows to hear flamenco music in gypsy caves. There is less to see and fewer surprises in the northern gray cities. It is the tough, tight-fisted, proper landscape of her unknown grandparents with strong coffee, cold lunches, sweet cheese, early dinner, and off to the ski slope and the mountain hut. No one stares. They are too busy reading their newspapers and buying new hiking boots. In the summer the light hangs around all night long.

"Look up my second cousin, Berta, in Oslo," someone tells Ret. "She has been an actress."

Berta's English is excellent. She may become the perfect friend at last. They dine on exquisite plates in an ancient restaurant with bitter-faced waiters in black suits. There are four kinds of cold fish and huge boiled potatoes. The bill is astronomical, but Berta is rich.

She tells Ret, "My life is so tragic I must share it with you. We are heart mates. You will understand. I can no longer bear the suffering. My husband has gone blind and my beautiful titian-haired daughter is dying. Every day she is more frail. It will kill my husband too. He thinks she has a stubborn virus. Even sitting beside her holding her thin hand he does not suspect yet. Oh, that sickroom is so oppressive. The lace curtains blow in and out. The breeze is so fresh and hopeful. My thin wonderful daughter stretches out her hands toward the garden sweetness." Berta begins to cry. Grape sized tears form and drop on the starched tablecloth. Then her shoulders shake. The tablecloth is becoming very damp.

Ret insists upon accompanying Berta home, where her neat husband has just driven in from the laboratory and her only child, a son, is walking the golden retriever. "Poor Berta," the husband whispers to Ret, "thinks she is in a life painted by Edvard Munch. We will have to send her away for a rest. It is better you should leave now."

Ret has become a proficient over-listener. "It is only because I have had such practice being alone," she says, self-deprecatingly. "If there were anyone to listen, I would talk to them and make them talk back. But better second-hand than none."

In Stockholm she hears a British couple planning a mass execution and then discovers that they are discussing rats in their basement at home, but the American mother-in-law in Helsinki really hates her son's new bride. The day that the girl finally throws her room key at the old lady's head and stalks out of the dining room, no one misses a mouthful. The waiter picks up the key. The son thanks his mother, "I never liked her anyway."

The better to hear bits and pieces of narrative, she hides in parks and plazas behind a camera. Despite blurs and misjudgments, enough curious views survive for her to be asked to entertain shut-ins with them. The recreation directors advance threateningly, all teeth, "And where are you going to take us today?" Her memories are as fragmented as slides, illuminated by anecdotes like firefly glow.

She wonders how she looks in snapshots or slides other tourists may have taken. "Who's that little grey woman beside the balloon seller? Do you remember her name? No. Funny lady. Now wait till you see this next slide of the belly dancer." Actually, she wears brown and rust more than grey. She scorns the washing routines that use up time, but she does like to have her hair done everywhere. Not for her hair, but for the companionship, the cheery voices, the satisfied final looks in the mirror, another sign that the world is still running. As dependable as bread, the connective tissue across continents. She buys bread everywhere.

There are times when none of this wandering makes any sense. She walks through foreign weather in her tidy coat, being shouted at in languages she will never learn. She is as skinny as driftwood. However, her only visible maladies are a slightly stiff heart and brain.

She travels in the suburbs of violence. The wrecks, crashes, and bombs are always for others. In Argentina she is led from the hotel before the explosion. A month after her visit, she watches on Japanese television the holocaust of a department store in Brussels. A plate glass window falls from the fourth floor of a Reno casino to kill a woman from Edmonton, while Ret turns the corner. She is getting ready for the violence marked for her. It never comes. Her suitcase is never lost. Her stomach never rebels.

Briefly home in her house, or really Kenny Huff's house, so unfamiliar is she with its spaces that she misses one of the back steps and falls the rest of the way onto the flagstone, shattering her hip.

So she does wind up at home in Vera's Senior Retreat. Every morning as she hears the heat rise and the night shift of nurses depart, she begins to struggle with her restraints. "Stop that," they say to her as she tries to brush aside the spoons of breakfast cereal. In her head is the perfect getaway scheme. She will get to the hall pay phone, call a taxi, be let off at the Greyhound terminal, and get on anything leaving. The left side of her body does not work any more.

"Tell her she's been there. Maybe she'll believe it, and that'll shut her up," the charge nurse tells the aide.

The aide explains patiently. "You must be very tired. You have been on a long trip. Now you've come home." □

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BABIES

ERIC LARSEN

There was excitement; we mimicked it. When the news came over the radio, I marched with my brother and sister along the curb in front of the house, banging the lids of saucepans like cymbals. In the living room my mother wept, her face cradled in her hands; the woman next door, standing at her porch rail, banged the bottom of an empty spaghetti pot with a wooden spoon. Across the street three boys lit firecrackers. They squatted down on the lawn, then leapt into the gathering dusk away from the brief point of white light and the bang. Downtown, two blocks away, there was the sound of honking horns, and for a time the unsteady pealing of a bell.

Men came back one by one from the edges of the earth; there were reunions in one house and then another. When my father came home, he put his visored cape with its heavy metal eagle on each of our heads, one after the other, and our pictures were taken. He opened his crumpled leather bag, showed us paper rolls of Japanese money, a spent artillery cartridge, three miniature elephants with their tusks tipped in ivory. At dinner the first night, pleasantly satisfied with eating, he leaned back in his chair, sighed deeply, and loosened his belt. After some time, my mother became pregnant.

I had spent the years of his absence dressing up in clothing from my mother's bureau and from her bedroom closet: the silken material of blouses cascaded over my bare arms; strings of heavy beads descended from my neck; the great lengths of her dresses and her yellow bathrobe trailed behind me over the polished wooden floor as I posed before the mirror hung on the door of the closet. (Gray daylight came through the panes of tall windows in the room. Small photographs were stuck around the edges of the mirror on my mother's dresser.)

Time passed slowly. On weekdays I walked home from school in the stillness and silence of noon for bowls of warm soup. Going past empty lawns in front of large quiet houses, I observed closed garage doors, tightly curtained windows, high pointed gables reaching toward a gray sky. In the evenings after dinner my mother read aloud to us or sat on the sofa knitting sweaters and mittens while I

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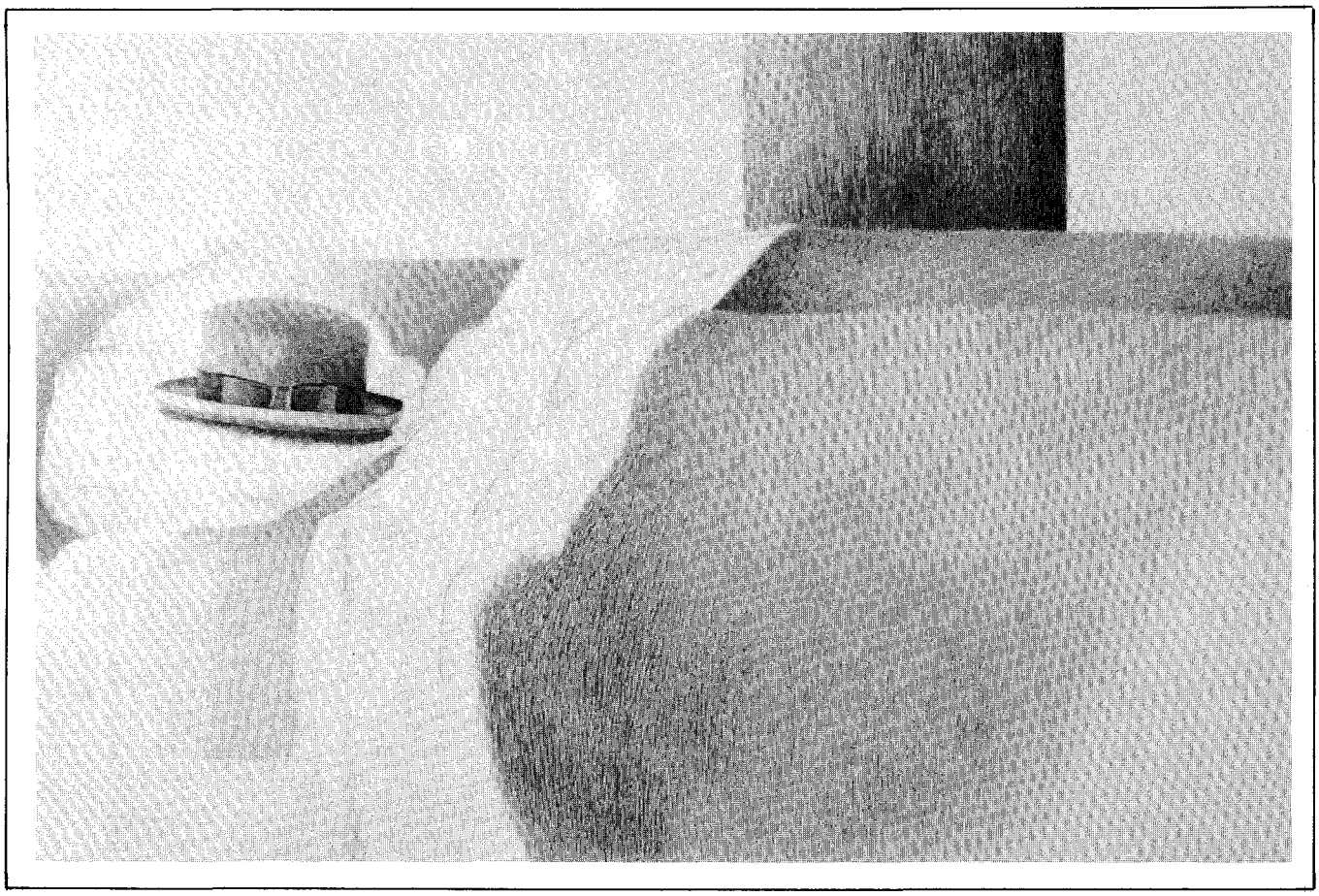

played imaginary games on the living room carpet with my brother and sister, and the furnace droned and hummed in the basement, warming the house against the cold outdoors.

In subtle, unspoken ways his discontent with the future in store for him colored the atmosphere of our lives. In late autumn, when it grew dark early and the air outdoors was chill, he would sit with my mother at the kitchen table and talk about the choices he would like to make. They drank glasses of whiskey while food steamed in saucepans on the stove. During these conversations their voices sometimes dropped low, and my mother turned her glass around slowly on the table in front of her, looking down into it.

Once, when I entered the kitchen to find them sitting entirely in silence, neither of them looking at the other, my father put out his arm in sudden joviality, pulled me up close and said,

"Well, Ingie, how would you like to move to a big white house by the ocean, up on a green hill, and have your daddy sail on ships and send you presents from all over the world?"

ERIC LARSEN lives in New York City, where he teaches at John Jay College. He is "no stranger to the NAR."

Awkward and slightly embarrassed in his rough embrace, I watched as my mother, in one motion, pushed back her chair and stood up to busy herself at the stove. She kept her back toward us and said nothing; but in spite of her silence it was years before I understood my father's regret at the war's having come to an end, and his continued wish for something dramatic to enter into his life.

It was like having a guest in the house. He was unfamiliar to us, fresh and exotic. We stood in a cluster at the bathroom door upstairs to watch him while he shaved, then followed him into the bedroom to see him dress. He was amused by us, laughed warmly, treated us to small indulgences. We wore his shoes, felt the roughness of his face, accepted touches of scented shaving lotion behind our ears. He allowed us to examine his cuff links, wear his jackets, even to study the contents of his pants pockets—the Zippo lighter, the pile of loose change, the slender penknife with its single blade, his key chain in the shape of a tiny ship with the keys suspended from its anchor. This mood, however, changed gradually, almost without our noticing it. As time went on, he touched our heads less frequently, he raised us in his arms only seldom, we heard his laughter less often. As the weeks went by, and then the months, the bedroom door came to be closed, and my father no longer joined us at the table for breakfast.

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Nothing was going to happen. After great sound, upheaval, the clashing of nations, unnameable terror, the world seemed not to breathe, to be still. The nature of drama itself had changed. My father, with loss and regret, tried in vain to imagine the remainder of his life. In his thoughts, he traveled to the far edges of the earth, covering great distances in search of clarity and romance, leaving us behind in the stillness of the small town, sheltered safely in our wooden frame house.

They did not quarrel. There was not the drama of raised voices in the night. My father did not abandon my mother. There was not violence between them. Very little happened, not enough for a story. In March, my mother became ill with her pregnancy; a woman came to the house to attend her in the daytime, while, in obedience to the doctor's orders, she remained in bed.

Shortly after Christmas my father returned to his job at the movie theater; he was away from the house in the evenings and slept late in the mornings. Time passed slowly and very little seemed to have changed. On weekdays I walked home from school in the stillness and silence of noon for bowls of warm soup. Passing empty lawns in front of large quiet houses, I observed closed front doors, primly curtained windows, high pointed gables reaching toward a cold sky. In the evenings after dinner my mother read aloud to us or sat on the sofa knitting sweaters and mittens while on the living room carpet my brother and sister and I played games devised of imaginary characters and in the basement below us the furnace droned and hummed quietly, warming the house against the cold and stillness outdoors.

(Lying one night on the sofa, my mother smelled smoke in the air, a subtle flavor of density and heat that she couldn't be certain of. At last she raised herself from the sofa and climbed the stairs, the hem of her long yellow bathrobe gathered in one hand. Near the top, she gave a sharp exclamation in sudden fear, and, turning to come down, stepped on the hem of the robe and fell. She reached out for the railing but missed it; her body flailing and turning, she fell terribly to the landing at the bottom of the stairs, where she lay crumpled, the yellow gown, having filled with air, collapsed and soft around her. For a moment there was the silence of nothingness. Then she started to move, not rising, but seeming almost invisibly to draw herself together. Her eyes were closed.

Run for your father, she whispered to Hannah and me.

Outdoors, the night air was icy, and patches of thawed snow gleamed pale in the darkness. We ran holding hands, Hannah pulling me behind her. She was dressed still in her school clothes, but I wore only a pair of slippers and my blue cotton nightgown, which billowed out behind me in the cold air as we ran.

From the top of the Fourth Street hill a block away, we could see the theater, its glass doors, square marquee, its rows of small lightbulbs that by blinking seemed to ripple in movement. We turned down the hill. My father stood in the doorway of the old stage entrance on Fourth Street, leaning there, as he habitually did, smoking a cigarette and looking out into the night while the movie played itself out, tinkling and frothy, on the other side of the closed door behind him. Standing there alone, dressed in his herringbone suit and gleaming shoes, poised suavely with one shoulder against the wall of the doorway as he gazed off into the night, perhaps he was dreaming of Manila, the white beaches of Tahiti, the warm night air of the Hawaiian Islands as we ran down the hill to find him. Hannah shouted out as we ran. My father dropped his cigarette, then pressed it under his toe as he turned out of the doorway and took a step or two toward us. For a brief moment, as we drew nearer, there was an expression of pleased amusement on his face, but then we were up to him and tugging at his hands and telling him, Mother fell down the stairs and the house is on fire.

When we got back, the fire truck was parked at the curb, its red lights pulsing slowly on top of the cab. Black smoke that breathed out red sparks and lily pads of soft flame rose from the chimney on the high peak of the house and drifted hurriedly up into the night sky. Men went in and out of the basement through an open cellar door. Others had placed a high ladder against a wall and were climbing to the roof.

In the living room, my mother had been placed on a stretcher; two firemen tightened webbed belts over her ankles, and another stood by, holding Malcolm perched on his arm, both of them watching. She was carried out, my father awkwardly holding open the door. Her hands grasped the rails and her eyes were shut tightly, as though she was listening to nothing around her and was aware of no one, but was concentrating on something inward, something significant, a problem that was intensely difficult.

From the front window, I watched the white ambulance they put her in move away. My father ran around the corner of the house to the garage, backed out the car, and followed. With my forehead pressed against the cold smooth glass of the front window, I looked out into the alarm of the night. I knew there were men on the roof of the house, and others in the basement. The red taillights of my father's small Ford, moving down the darkened street as though pulled along by an invisible string, grew smaller, diminished, then disappeared. This was in 1946. I was seven years old. I remember my mother's white knuckles as she gripped the rails of the stretcher, the look of terror on my father's face as he held open the door, and the people from the neighborhood, after the ambulance was gone, emerging from the darkness of the night to gaze silently in at us where we stood, captured, behind the lighted windows of our house.) □

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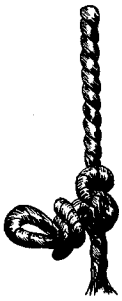
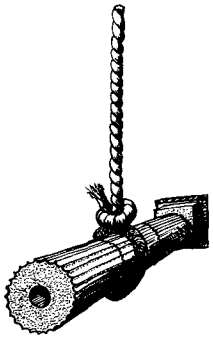
The Mariners' Guide To Contemporary Poetry

SIMPLE LINEAR

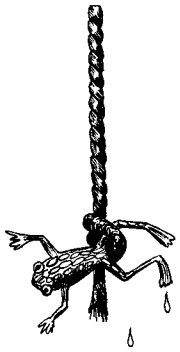
LINEAR with CLOSING TWIST



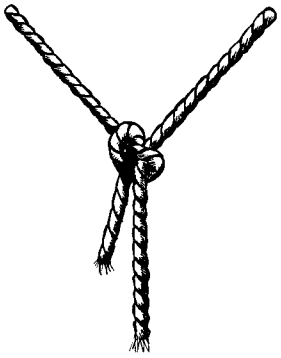
LINEAR with Overdone Figure



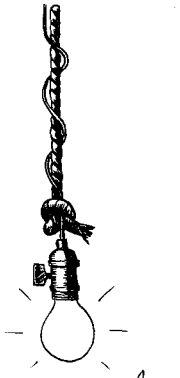
LINEAR with ~CLASSICAL~ ALLUSION



HAIKU



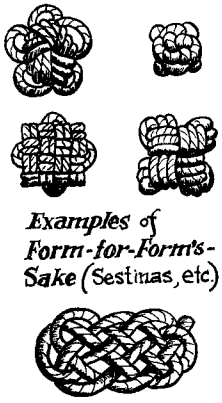
TRANSLATION Simple Literal



the POEM of STEADY *Light*

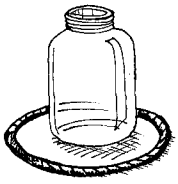
CONFESSIONAL

MIXED METAPHOR



Examples of Form-for-Form's-Sake (Sestinas, etc.)

CATALOG



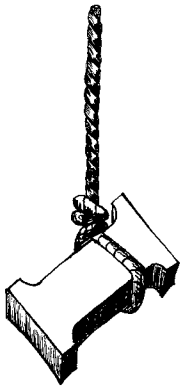
Jar-in-Tennessee-type poem

The Long, Dull Poem

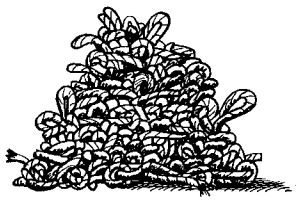
POEM with WEIGHTY SUBJECT

Los Angeles Poem

SURREALIST POEM



Very Popular: the 'I' Poem



ASHBERY POEM

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Fire in the Hills:

A California Perspective

Ambrose was ready to kill us. Ambrose was nineteen and two hundred pounds and six-foot-three and two hundred and eight-four days of his life had been spent rotting in a prison for the criminally insane at Atascadero, California. Now he was back in. Over the weekend he had been transferred from the county jail to the locked psychiatric ward where I was working.

Even mad, Ambrose was beautiful. His coally black, smooth skin seemed African, not American, his forehead was broad, his arms massively muscled. He wore one of the orange jumpsuits issued at the county jail, with grease and dirt rubbed in as deep as original sin. Ambrose's gaze turned from me to Dr. Walsh, my supervisor, then fixed before the door. Something we could not see fascinated him. From time to time he winced or laughed. The air stank. The room's two doors were both impossibly distant—one behind Ambrose, the other jammed by a metal desk. I tried to think of what to ask. My years of medical school anatomy and physiology and biochemistry were useless before the fear Ambrose put in me.

He jerked in the chair. I recoiled. Ambrose's neck was bruised purple where he had tried to strangle himself. First he had beaten another prisoner, then he choked himself with his big hands. That was when they brought him from the county jail over to the locked ward where we were supposed to take care of that kind of thing.

"What . . . what happened, Ambrose?" I asked him.

He kept looking at the air before the door.

"At the jail. Why did they send you over here?"

Ambrose stared at Dr. Walsh. "He the doctor who sent me up to Atascadero?"

"I don't think he's ever seen you before," I said.

"Bullshit," said Ambrose. He was eyeing Walsh from head to foot. "I remember that fucking spot on his face."

Dr. Walsh was sweating, but then so was I. Red pepper-and-salt hair was brushed down over his forehead to his bushy eyebrows. On his right cheek was what Ambrose was talking about, a birthmark that was pink-red and raised, the size and shape of a jalapeño pepper. All the patients asked Walsh about it, and generally it didn't bother him. It matched Walsh's hair and complexion, making him look designer-coordinated, like the drapes and upholstery of some house on a dry California hillside. Usually Walsh was blank as one of those California houses—imperturbable, motionless and opaque, revealing only surfaces set behind surfaces, one reflection moving behind another like the panes of glass in a sliding door. He was the kind of Californian Joan Didion writes about, a quiet and well-tanned and technical man; he drove a shiny BMW out of the foothills every morning up to the front of the psychiatry building, where he would park in the ambulance-loading zone and enter morning rounds fifteen minutes late, with coffee cup and Marlboro Lights in hand, and he would sit down—quietly, calmly—to hear about the patients who had been admitted overnight. Nothing ruffled him.

But now Walsh looked as scared as I felt. It was obvious Ambrose was working up to something, right before our eyes, and here we were, watching it build, awed by his beauty and the questions of when and to whom, and afraid to move. I was not surprised when Ambrose lunged forward at us—but I was surprised that his hands grabbed the chair as if it alone kept him from smashing our skulls. Veins snaked out over his forearms.

Voice shaking, Dr. Walsh said something.

"What?" said Ambrose.

Dr. Walsh said Ambrose was free to leave, that we didn't have any more questions for him.

"No questions for me?" Ambrose sank back in the chair. "I got questions for you. You going to send me to Atascadero?"

"No," said Dr. Walsh.

"How do I know? Tell me how do I know."

Ambrose just stared. Nothing Walsh said could stop that murderous staring.

A minute later Ambrose broke loose from the chair, but his hands reached for the doorknob, not for our necks. He lumbered out of the room and stopped in the hall, confused. It was only after Walsh rushed to the door and locked it, and sank in Ambrose's chair, rolling his head back, the entire ruddy terrain of his face drenched in sweat, that he said anything.

"Jesus," he said.

Then we heard screaming out in the hall.

Five psych techs were sitting on Ambrose by the time we got out to the nurses' station, each holding one limb, another on his head. In a moment or two they picked him up face down, and ran him down the hall toward the seclusion room like a human battering ram. Someone went after them with the four-points, leather manacles with leather straps which could be attached to the four corners of the mattress-frame.

Guardino, a patient, was holding his face. Guardino was a scrawny red-headed Sicilian who was in for setting grassfires in the hills. He told us he burned churches too.

"Ambrose hit him," said Donna, the social worker. "See if he's all right."

He was holding his face, but he didn't even have a bloody nose when I pried his hands away.

Ambrose started screaming in the seclusion room.

"Ten of Haldol I.M.," said Dr. Walsh.

"Vitamin H," said Donna, smiling. Her boyfriend was a rock musician who once played for Jefferson Airplane, and she liked drugs. She wore an embroidered peasant blouse and no bra and a long skirt and leather sandals and her toenails were painted silver. "He'll shut up pretty soon."

That afternoon, when I was about to leave, I walked past the open door of the seclusion room. A nurse crouched by Ambrose's side, about to shoot him with more Haldol.

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"You!" he called. I stopped in the doorway. He called me closer and I came to stand above him. He strained against the leather straps, toward me, and I would remember for a long time the sound of his pleading. "Why don't you let my arm go? Come on, let my arm go. I want to scratch my face."

"I can't," I said.

"What's the matter? You afraid I'll punch you out? You afraid I'll kick you?"

I didn't say anything. I was feeling sick, sick in the stomach and sick of the whole place, and I didn't want anything more than to drive up the peninsula to the university and dive in the fifty-meter outdoor swimming pool where I swam a mile an afternoon and, as a summer project, was perfecting my flip-turn.

"Let go my fucking hand!" He came at me, twisting, convulsing, with such a force of effort that he nearly flipped the whole bed on top of himself. He roared. First it was about his hand, then it was unintelligible. Then he started wailing his guts out. "I'll kill you! I mean *you*, motherfucker, *you*! When I get loose I'll kill you!"

* * *

Three years later and two thousand miles away from the locked ward I still worry over that day I sat with Dr. Walsh in a small green-painted room in a county hospital in San Jose, watching Ambrose and waiting for him to come at us, and I still don't know what to make of it. Something besides terror was present in that room, something that held me fascinated in a way it is hard for me to sympathize with these days, now that I have a better idea of what psychosis is about and what cannot be done about it, and what the so-called antipsychotic medications are all about. But at that time the locked ward of that county hospital, ugly and stale-aired, in violation of fire codes and incidentally of human decency, that locked ward seemed to tell of the failure of California. It fascinated me that the madness of the patients was so Californian in type. Every morning two or three new patients came in, overwhelmed by biology or life. They had been picked up walking naked down a freeway and swinging a golf club, or for screaming non-stop in a home-computer store, or for overdosing on angel dust. Some had committed spectacular, grisly crimes. Their lives were *National Enquirer* headlines:

Woman Runs Down Mailman With Sportscar
Mother and Grandmother Kicked to Death by Son
Boards Airplane Without Ticket, Assaults Stewardess
Hillside Arsonist Confesses
Rock-Throwing Youth Sent to Mental Ward
Prof's Wife Slashes Wrists

Talking with them made one feel disturbed and befuddled, the way one feels after reading a Didion essay—led toward one destination only to have the ground shift beneath you so you end up somewhere unexpected, full of anxiety. The pure products of America brought to the locked ward crazy from PCP or schizophrenia would stay three or four days only. On the ward they would sulk or cry or sleep or act according to the dictates of their madness, posturing like practitioners of tai chi, speaking secret languages, leaving incomprehensible messages on pieces of paper. They would be shot with phenothiazines. Then they would be sent out to a halfway house with an acronym for a name or sent home or to jail, or depending on the vagaries of Medi-Cal and S.S. would be let loose to wander back on the streets where they had come from. The ones who didn't take their medications would come right back. The ones who spoke to God would continue speaking to God. Some bounced back to the ward every other week. It was an odd place. Oddest of all was the attraction I felt toward the place, and the way an idea got fixed in my head that what I was seeing had something to do with psychiatry and—even odder—that I wanted to be a psychiatrist, so that through the rest of medical school, a dozen more rotations in medicine and surgery and pediatrics, I could not get that idea out of my head, and all the rest would seem a diversion.

* * *

The major therapeutic activity on the ward, if an unofficial one, involved the rolling of cigarettes. For some reason no one understood, the bureaucracy of the California mental health system was able to afford cans of tobacco and sheaves of rolling papers but not whole cigarettes, so patients who were not too psychotic spent much of their days rolling cigarettes on a little machine made of a metal frame and two dowels with a loop of canvas around them. A pack of papers and an open can of tobacco would sit on one side, a few cigarettes on the other; the completed product would soon disappear, distributed among patients. Since patients were not allowed to have matches, they would light each cigarette off the dying butt of the last.

The next morning I was surprised to see Ambrose sitting at the table by the nurses' station, rolling cigarettes. He was doing a pretty good job with the little machine, despite his big, clumsy hands, and a pile of cigarettes sat off to the side. I kept my distance.

He even came to the group meeting we had every morning after rounds, carrying a tan-and-black can of Laredo tobacco and a packet of Zig-Zag rolling papers. He was grinning like a kid. He rolled himself half a dozen more cigarettes during group, fat in the middle and with tufts of tobacco sprouting from their ends. He interrupted Donna.

"Hey, anyone got a light?"

"Ambrose, please be quiet," said Donna. Someone handed him a cigarette so he could light up. A new patient, a young Arab, was talking about why he had ended up in the hospital. The night before, after holding his wife hostage for five hours, he had surrendered to police and was brought in. There was no gun; they found him in a closet. All this had made the papers and the evening news. Now he wanted to apologize to his wife, but she was gone—spending the day in Marine World with her brother, forgetting.

"Why is he here? He's here because he's crazy like the rest of us," said Ambrose. "Can I talk?"

"Let Mohammed talk first."

Mohammed started crying.

Ambrose stood up and walked to the door. He took the cigarette he was smoking and lit another one in his hand. He made a move to offer it to someone but no one would take it, so he just stood with two cigarettes burning in his hands.

"When you all going to let me out of here?"

"Ambrose, you're interrupting."

He looked sharply at me, all boyishness leaving his face. "Look, man, I been in the hospital two hundred and eighty-four days. And I want to get out of here. You understand?"

"This is group meeting," I said. "You want to stay or go?"

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He looked at the cigarette in his hand. "I want to think about it for a while."

The next day in group meeting he had some suggestions for another patient, an unkempt, sallow kid who kept telling us he didn't care what happened to him.

"What do you mean?" Ambrose said. "Ain't you got a check coming? Or ain't you even together enough to sign up for your money? You know what, man, I tell you what you should do. Number one, wash your greasy hair. Number two, shave them whiskers off. You ain't got enough hair to grow a beard. Number three . . . number three, take a shower. Number four . . . "

"You really have it all worked out for him, Ambrose," I said.

Ambrose grinned; everyone laughed.

By this time we had gotten to like Ambrose. The Haldol or something had knocked the anger back for a while, and he was so charming and beautiful that everyone liked him. We had a barbecue that day, made by the patients, for both patients and staff. The tossed salad had cinders in it, the carrots-and-raisins-with-mayonnaise tasted soapy, and the hamburgers had been patted into odd shapes by hands I preferred not to think about, but we all went into the courtyard for lunch—Dr. Walsh and Donna and I and the psych techs. Guardino, the Sicilian, bounced a worn basketball off his hairy knees, alternating left and right and shouting to God in Italian. A new patient, a black-haired woman in a loose bathrobe, was screaming full-pitch, but no one paid attention to her. "*Animal. Stop. House. Left turn. Saturday. One step. Andrea. Crystal. K-k-k-k-k-k-krystal. Stop!*" Donna, the social worker, had twisted her ankle, and she sat soaking her bare foot in a bedpan of hot water. I came by, holding a soggy paper plate of food, and saw Ambrose by her side, holding her hand. She let him keep holding her hand even though by now we knew that what he was sent up to Atascadero for was rape.

"I ain't going to hurt you or punch you or scratch you or do nothing to you," he was saying to her. "That girl, she lied on me. I got sent away for something I didn't do, and I ain't touched ground since."

Dr. Walsh came up to me, and we started talking. We seemed closer after what happened with Ambrose. He said affably to me, loud enough that Ambrose could have heard it if he had not been watching Donna so closely, "It's hard to know what to do with someone like him."

The next day Ambrose's seventy-two hours were up and he wanted to leave. Charges from the county jail—whatever they were—had been dropped, and since he didn't look like he was going to kill anyone immediately we had to let him go. The most we could offer him was a bus ticket to El Segundo, where his cousin, a linebacker for the Rams, lived, and where his father sometimes drifted through.

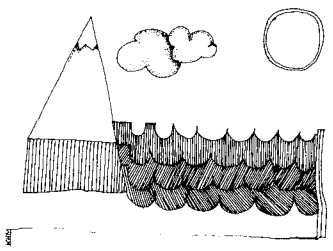
"Call El Segundo," Ambrose said. "So they can tell my dad to loaf around the bus station to pick me up when the bus gets in."

We talked about why he needed to take his medications even though they made him stiff.

"I want to be loose as a goose," said Ambrose. "I'm all tied up right now."

"Look, man," said Donna, "We understand. But you've got to take your meds or you'll be right back in here."

"I know that," Ambrose said.



"You think you could give me a ride to the bus station?"

"We can call you a cab."

"No thanks," said Ambrose. "I'll walk."

"It's a long way. It's a hell of a long way."

"I just want to walk and think in the blue sky. I got plenty of time. I just got to take care of business."

"We can only give you ten days worth of medications," I said. "You'll have to get a refill down in El Segundo."

"I know that," he said. "But first I'm going to see what's happening here in San Jose. I got a lot of friends here, thirty or forty at least." One moment Ambrose was all lit up, grinning, the next he was solemn enough to punch me.

Finally he shuffled out of the office. He stopped a moment, staring at whatever it was we could not see, then walked away.

"He won't take them," I said.

"He might," Donna said.

"He's got a lousy prognosis," said Dr. Walsh.

Later, during coffee break, I looked out the window and saw Ambrose slowly walking around the dry shrubbery. Walsh and I were talking differential diagnosis on the new, screaming woman, and we talked for half an hour before Ambrose disappeared.

The next morning Donna limped into the office looking upset.

"Did he finally go?" she said. "When I left last night he was out there in the parking lot, by my car. You know, he follows women, that's why he was in jail. I hope he doesn't know where I live. How do you think he knew which car was mine?"

For the next few days I checked around my car too before getting in; I recalled what Ambrose said when he was mad, and he might, too. But we never saw him again.

* * *

In *The White Album* Joan Didion has an essay called "In the Islands," written from Hawaii but about California. She writes:

> Quite often during the past several years I have felt myself a sleepwalker, moving through the world unconscious of the moment's high issues, oblivious to its data, alert only to the stuff of bad dreams, the children burning in the locked car in the supermarket parking lot, the bike boys stripping down stolen cars on the captive cripple's ranch, the freeway sniper who feels "real bad" about picking off the family of five, the hustlers, the insane, the cunning Okie faces that turn up in military investigations, the sullen lurkers in doorways, the lost children, all the ignorant armies jostling in the night.

Sometimes I wondered whether the entire state of California was filled with sleepwalkers. It was the obsession with the beautiful surface, the perfect tan, the outward ahistorical data of immediate presence. Man seemed to be only a creature of action, with no inner mechanism of being, and perhaps without existence when at rest. Language was for moments when there were no pictures to be seen, and at the extreme, an act of any kind, however violent, was better than a book. If this was not all an Easterner's delusion, perhaps it explained why I never really knew what had happened to Ambrose and never really understood Dr. Walsh, and

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why I learned a faultless flip-turn that summer and got the darkest and evenest tan of my life.

Dr. Walsh, for example. He tested on himself the drugs he prescribed for patients. Haldol, Prolixin, Cogentin, Thorazine—in smaller doses than we gave psychotic patients, but enough that he sat through more than one staff meeting glassy-eyed and stiff-muscled as a chronic patient, and once he had to go lie down, saying he felt ill. I could never find out the purpose of this. Was he concerned about what his patients felt or was he just bored? Similarly, he let the social workers and psych techs order medications for patients, which was highly unusual, and later came around to sign the day's orders. Was this a radical, liberating stance, or again, was he experimenting out of inchoate and perhaps even malicious boredom? Since he acted wordlessly it was impossible to know.

What we did to Dr. Walsh soon before I left the service may have been my idea or it may have been Donna's, but whosever idea it was didn't really matter because soon everyone on the ward was involved in it, everyone but the patients, that is. Donna was having a feud with Walsh, only half-serious but a feud nevertheless. He would joke about her skinny legs and how she looked like his ex-wife; she would make comments about his birthmark. They played tricks on each other, and finally the joking extended to me, I forget exactly why.

* * *

The day we played the trick was a hot, quiet day, too hot a day to be truly insane. All the windows were pulled up, and the doors that locked were propped open to let air circulate through. The ward was down in census, as they say—only fifteen patients for the ward's twenty-four beds. Patients lay half-naked on their beds, or sat under umbrellas outside, staring across the sunbaked basketball court at the hills beyond. You could see the brown California foothills, above which were some dark smudges of smoke. It had been a month since Guardino left, and I wondered if he was back at his work.

As soon as Dr. Walsh came back from lunch we had the new patient brought in. He was a dishevelled young dark-haired man, and in the process of going crazy he had lost his shirt. The psych techs had wrapped a strait-jacket around him, and he was rolling his head around, muttering to himself. He was a psychologist who worked in another part of the hospital and whom Dr. Walsh had never met, and it was all staged and rehearsed. All we lacked from the Californian perspective was a hidden camera and hushed film crew.

The man screamed about God and telephone wires and swore at the psych techs holding him and he started spitting when Dr. Walsh came close.

"Do you think he needs seclusion?" I asked Walsh.

Dr. Walsh looked sated by the heat and food. "Has he gotten any meds yet?"

"Ten of Haldol," said Donna.

"Lets get ten more. He's agitated—I think we should get the four-points."

"He attacked three cops," I lied. "Broke one guy's arm."

"Let's get twenty of Haldol then," said Dr. Walsh.

Donna came up with the four-points.

The psych techs got him into the seclusion room and wrestled him down on the mattress. Donna handed the four-points around and each of us

chose a limb to put them on, and pretended to attach the straps to the frame of the bed. Then we all stood around waiting for Walsh to go in. The psychologist thrashed around, then lay still, his chest heaving.

When Walsh bent over to examine him we were all watching. It went perfectly—the leather straps of the four-points slipping loose as the patient reached suddenly to embrace Walsh and Walsh's look of absolute and unredeemable terror as he lost balance and fell to the floor. The ward exploded in laughter.

Even after Dr. Walsh was set loose and had it explained to him and laughed about it and at himself, there was still an ashen cast to his face. Everyone felt bad; it hadn't really worked out right. It was like the time an earthquake hit when we were on medical rounds—the entire hospital shaking beneath us, televisions and cardiac monitors swaying at their wall mounts. The native Californians among us had all run under doorframes; the Easterners stood still, too terrified to move, waiting for a shock to send the whole hospital down on our heads.

The worst thing was that the patients, who had gathered in the hallway behind us, didn't think it was funny at all. For the next week or so, until they all left and a new batch of patients had been brought in, they didn't want to talk to us or take their medications. I couldn't blame them, either. Why should they trust us? Eventually, of course, things went back to normal.

* * *

Dr. Walsh quit his job on the locked ward that very Fall, and though I didn't know the reasons I wondered whether the trick might have had something to do with it. The next time I encountered him, and the last time, was a year later. It was in the medical center library, up at the university. I told him I was applying for residencies in psychiatry and asked him for a recommendation.

He looked pale, his skin and hair grayer than I remembered and even the birthmark seemed to have lost its bright pink-orange freshness. He did not seem enthusiastic about my career decision, even though he must have known the effect of his example on me. That bothered me. Was I victim of some serious misunderstanding? Had I somehow missed the point? But he was blank and impenetrable enough that I knew it was useless to ask. The recommendation he later wrote for me, according to my adviser, was positive "but lacking a certain tone of enthusiasm," as if it too had gotten gray and tired.

Talking with him made me nervous, it was so obvious he was at loose ends. It was as if the ground was starting to shake, mud sliding down hills, foundations loosening. He was tired of what he had been doing, he said. He was not sure of what he would do next. Maybe he would get a job in administration. Or maybe leave the country—he had always wanted to move to Australia. He had had enough of all this, he said. As if *all this* meant a lot.

I didn't ask what he meant by *all this* because I was afraid he might tell me, and then I would have to know. And at that point I didn't want to know. My suspicions alone were difficult enough. *–David Hellerstein*

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Supply Side Ethics

Supply side economics is a slogan. You believe it because you believe it. (Wall St. doesn't.) It's based on the theory that if you give the rich enough money, they will then "make" enough more so that it will spill over the sides to the not-rich. The trickle-down theory. History is not full of examples of money trickling down. Money tends to be too sticky to trickle.

* * *

The first time I went to Mexico City a drink in a good bar was a quarter, a shoeshine in the Zocalo two cents. Ten years later the drink was a dollar twenty, the shoeshine was two cents. Of course you have to have somebody making more than two cents in order to afford the shine. That may qualify as an idea.

Politics claims to project ideas, to "have" them. It doesn't. Politics has nothing but itself. It is a mechanism by which existing ideas and feelings are translated into the substantial form of social action. Political parties are identical mechanisms. They differ only in the ideas they make themselves available to serve. Since every idea implies its opposite, any fluid social system will have at least two "parties." These parties come to symbolize the mind-set that they serve, and are often misconstrued as having in themselves a philosophy. It's like saying an army has a philosophy.

* * *

Politics is a matter of placing and exercising authority. One may have a philosophy of authority, concerned with its nature and necessities; one may have a set of attitudes toward the obligations of authority. The two are usually connected. Capitalism, for example, sprang up in a Christian society, the social ethic of which concerned itself not with kings and heroes but with the sparrow, the least among us. Social ethics in the western world have had to do almost exclusively with the protection of the weak. Which is to say the mass of humanity, since most of us are more of the weak than of the strong.

Social ethic followed religious ethic, even to the tradition of the tithe, here with the "fortunate" giving a part of their substance to the "unfortunate." Sound familiar? First there has to be a fortunate, right? David Stockman not only has the name for it but even *looks* like someone who would talk this way. It's the ethical approach of the élite: run the store efficiently, and at the end of the day send the clerk home with a bag of groceries for himself. Whereas the mass-man approach is to fill the bag for himself and friends first, then if there's anything left at the end of the day let the owner keep it.

* * *

Both ways are based upon selfishness parading as social ethic. One way oppresses the weak; the other suppresses the strong. Yet there is a stark difference between them: having a heart for the masses is an ancient idea but a modern reality. Never before on any scale has it had an effective political mechanism at its service. In most of the world it still doesn't. As a result it seems not only an advance in human social organization but the sole keeper and proprietor of the emerging conscience of the race. FDR is a *mensch*; Herbert Hoover is a humanoid. That's what may be considered a reasonable overstatement.

But the presumed ethical development was taken a step further. A big step: it became the *sole* ethic, and the political mechanism serving it became the sole "party." Presto-changeo: we're back in the middle ages, without a God. Without even an idea, the political mechanism having first gained control over the social idea and then supplanted it. The idea fades, the mechanism remains: "state socialism."

It is a mechanism that frightens the daylights out of us, of U.S. Such a scare erodes sympathy first, rationality later. Fright has no ethic. It is a yell for help. It wants that yell to be answered by an Alexander Haig, not a kindly philosopher. It wants bloody budget cuts because it's war, not peace. Unchecked, inflation may do what Marxist thought and action have as yet been unable to do—bring down the system.

* * *

The supply side ethics of our newly-chosen administration are concentrated on only one grace—saving the system. If it doesn't feel ethical that's because it is primal, primitive. The Republicans do in fact represent the more primitive idea. With no governing ideal beyond "business" and the status quo, they seem unconcerned with humaneness. (Philanthropy is their idea of humaneness; you have to be well off to be philanthropic.) Yet they are, for the very reason of the narrowness of their vision, more intense ideologues than the Democrats. If there's to be a Crusade, they are better fit to lead it.

So it comes down to whether or not you are convinced a) of the necessity, b) of the true purpose of the crusade.

But for now, if you want humanistic ethics, you'd better supply them yourself. *–Kenneth Lash*

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FREDERIC WILL

TWO POEMS

I BEDDED DOWN

I bedded in Plains, washed my hair in pepsi, my ears in
forked gray lightning, my penis in the cat's milk at
Cassoday, the Prairie Chicken Capitol of the World. In the
morning I went out like a guard dog, sniffing, looked
around at the ball-shaped macrosphere. Kansas lay there
dusty and throbbing as a Harvester Combine. Wheat stubble,
blazing, mopped the neighboring miles. Part of me longed
to run like a fishbowl, to spill myself indifferently
into the cheddar shaped chunks of loam. More of me wished
simply to tear myself apart, which I did with a bottle
opener, tearing first my flesh then my shoe laces. The
maid found me dripping like a day old calf, my heart still
beating in the ashtray by the Gideons.

ME AND THE WRECKED ORNAMENTS

I pack a wallop. Straight in through the living room window
and slaughter a dog. Correction, all I really do is batter
my hand against the sink, run to my wife for a band-aid.
You see I'm a bragadoccio baby. In the seventeenth century
I composed serial sonatas, windjammer fugues, long thin arias
for clavichord and jew's harp. Today I simply dream of all
that. Smiling, I tell you I'm from Chateau du Reaucomfort,
that my ancestors fought at Roncesvalles, that I myself
compose madrigals. But nothing about me supports this gran-
diloquent image. I am small, semitic. My teeth protrude
like weevils. I wear my clothes like a garbage can. I pack
a wallop. That wallop, though, is but the fist of a doorman.
My fingers stutter over the Franck sonata.

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Freud and the Problem of God (The Terry Lectures), by Hans Küng. Yale. $3.95 (paper)

Freud vs. Theological Rationalism:

A Stalemate?

Whether Freud is fully countable as an atheist depends on the definition of religion against which his atheism must contend. If religion is an ultimate concern, then Freud was filled to overflowing with missionary zeal. When Ernest Jones, in 1912, hatched the idea of the Committee, Freud eagerly seized on it as a way of ensuring the lasting purity of orthodox psychoanalysis at a time when Adler and Stekel had already defected and even Jung was beginning to show signs of doubting the true faith. The Committee was to be a band of brothers with Freud as the patriarch. It was to function as a kind of bodyguard charged with rescuing Freud from his "loneliness and isolation." And, when Freud was no more, the Committee would ensure that the doctrine he represented would be spread internationally.

The original six disciples, plus one, Max Eitingon, received from Freud distinctive intaglio rings (bearing the head of Jupiter) as a mark of their commitment. They swore not to depart publicly from the tenets of psychoanalysis without first discussing the matter within this psychoanalytical cell. Of the original six, four remained faithful to the end, only Rank and Ferenczi unable to bear the tensions generated by their oath of fealty. Characteristically enough, Jones ascribed the apostasy of both to "psychosis" and not merely to a strong difference of scientific opinion.

Freud himself insisted that this little society be secret. He even set down an order of precedence among its members, the inner circle of the group being composed of Jones, Ferenczi, and Rank—the truest of true believers. One can almost hear the accents of the Petrine Succession. There is little in the story of the Committee to suggest a fraternity of scientists. Instead, it has the hallmarks both of a boys' secret society (as Jones himself admitted) and of a gnostic religious cult. There is a secret salvation, a rational salvation. The world can be saved from its worst follies, but only if this group of savants preserves and propagates the true faith.

It would avail nothing to press the analogy between Freudian psychoanalysis and religion far enough to argue that this shared ultimate concern was fully a "religion." On the other hand, the analogy is close enough that the slipperiness of the distinction between religious belief and quasireligious secular faith should not be lost to sight. Freud's atheism, like every other atheism, is the denial of a particular kind of God. Paradoxically enough, Freudian atheism is based on a set of principles held by true believers such that it is not entirely absurd to say that Freud's psychoanalysis was embattled against the partisans of a competing religion. The contention, at any rate, was not simply a battle of faith against nonfaith. Probably the analogy between Freudianism and conventional religion is not quite robust enough to allow the claim that psychoanalysis was out to "excommunicate" the partisans of an outworn religion in favor of a new church. But even that exaggeration helps us to understand some of the peculiarities of Hans Küng's recent book about Freud and religion.

Paul Robinson, reviewing *Freud and the Problem of God* for *The New Republic*, finds Küng's book to be a real bomb. Expecting something like an operatic performance when Küng, "considered by many the foremost Roman Catholic theologian in the world," is pitted against the arch-atheist Freud, he was disappointed to have read through a "non-performance." Expecting to witness a vigorous attack on Freud in defense of Catholic truth, Robinson complains that the whole venture suffers from a pervasive "ecumenical fog," Küng's attitude towards Freud ranging from "respectful to adulatory." Robinson judges that Küng's billing as a high-powered defender of the faith is totally misleading. All we learn, he laments, is something very dismal about how intellectually lightweight is the best of modern Catholic apologetics.

While I shared Robinson's disappointment with this book, I came to believe that some of that disappointment was attributable to my not fully grasping the strategy and tactics of Küng's approach to Freud. For example, given the fact that Küng was addressing an audience he presumed not to be well acquainted with Freud's work on religion and who might be supposed to be ignorantly prejudiced against it, he was probably well advised to devote almost half of his study to a summary of what Freud said. While the summary is competent enough, it does not tell us anything new. Nor does it pretend to take account of some recent Freudian scholarship, such as Frank Sulloway's analysis of the contribution of biology to the Freudian system. The larger part of the book is devoted to a Critique (and a "critique" of the Critique). It is after plowing through the critical portion that disappointment threatens the reader. For the critique is hardly a rejection of the errors of Freudianism or even a demonstration of the truth of theism. It represents, instead, a dogged attempt to appropriate Freud's atheism for the Christian faith, relegating Freud's criticism of religion to the position of a description of the pathological features of faith perverted by institutionalization. Given what appear to be Küng's tactics, a frontal attack on Freud would have served no apologetic purpose. Better to join forces with the enemy and make common cause with him. It reminded me of earlier conquering Romans' toleration of barbarian customs in order eventually to incorporate the dissidents as provincials of the Roman imperium.

* * *

Freud, though he clung to the very end to his Jewishness and learned some of the essentials of the Jewish faith as a child, had ceased to entertain any customary religious convictions by the time he reached the age of reason. Or, if the recollections of early training and the instruction of

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his Catholic nanny still lingered, they were certainly dispelled once and for all when Freud embraced the strict materialism of his favorite professor at the University of Vienna, Ernst Brücke. As a boy, his interest in cultural and philosophical "riddles" was strong, so strong that he told his great and good friend Fliess that he was traveling by a detour to encounter through psychoanalysis a solution of the problems that had fascinated him as a youth.

Freud first wrote about religion in 1907 and was revising a book on Moses in the year of his death. In that brief essay of 1907, he called attention to the resemblance between the compulsive-obsessive practices of certain neurotics and the ritualized worship of religious believers. In both cases, guilty fear ensued upon the omission of these acts but without any rational appreciation of why the omissions should occasion the feelings. The neurotic, in effect, possesses a "private religion." Religion proper becomes, by analogy, a universalized obsessional neurosis. A little earlier, in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud had briefly mentioned the posture that he was to elaborate upon in future, namely that the mythological worldview was nothing but "psychological processes projected into the outer world." The projective view, as Freud readily admitted, was no fresh discovery of psychoanalysis. Nietzsche and Feuerbach had already presented reductive analyses of religion that gave them psychological status while denying them any referent in the world of real objects. In *Totem and Taboo* (1911) he found the origins of religion in the Oedipus complex, the murdered father of the rebellious brothers having been elevated out of guilty conscience into a transcendent Father-God. Characteristically, the true origin was hidden from believers themselves by the mask of a symbolic animal surrogate who was alternately venerated and consumed in memory of a repressed past.

In *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) Freud supplemented his account of the origins of religion with an essay on its claims as a species of rational knowledge of the world. His conclusion was that religion is not necessarily an error or untrue. Instead religion is the fantasied fulfillment of a childish wish for the protection of the father. Religion derives from the continued helplessness of the adult in the face of terrible and uncontrollable pain and suffering threatened by the real world. This fear moves men backward to unconsciously reinstate infantile perceptions while reinforcing the wish with grown-up, but very unconvincing, argumentation. As Freud puts it, the wish of Cinderella that she be rescued by a handsome prince is not a flat-out error. It could happen. It is just very very unlikely that things should turn out to be exactly as we wish they were.

One of the best examples of Freud's style of reductionism in religion comes, not in the *Illusion*, but from *Civilization and Its Discontents*. There, responding to Romain Rolland's complaint that Freud's psychology of religion did not take account of the "oceanic feeling," a mystical experience of one's unity with the whole of the universe, Freud made the following reductive argument. While he admitted the feeling seemed to transcend the self and enfold it seamlessly into the infinite cosmos, he claimed that its origin belied its seeming significance.

The feeling derives from the fact that "An infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensations flowing in upon him." When that infantile oneness is unconsciously recollected much later by a shrunken adult-sized ego, it falsely seems to reveal a world of metaphysical oneness. And it consoles by denying the real dangers and hostilities of a pluralistic, alien world. But, Freud wrote,

> . . . the claim does not seem compelling. After all, a feeling can only be a source of energy if it is itself the expression of a strong need. The derivation of religious needs from the infant's helplessness and the longing for the father aroused by it seems to me incontrovertible, especially since the feeling is not simply prolonged from childhood days, but is permanently sustained by the superior power of Fate. I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection. Thus the part played by the oceanic feeling, which might seek something like the restoration of limitless narcissism, is ousted from a place in the foreground. The origin of the religious attitude can be traced back in clear outlines as far as the feeling of infantile helplessness. There may be something further behind that, but for the present it is wrapped in obscurity.

In principle, this observation saps the significance of all experiences of mystical unity! Such feelings must never be taken at face value. Traced backward to their origins in the childhood of the race, they must then be mined by analysis for their illusory application to the future. Then the true meaning gets revealed as unconscious reinstitution of an archaic need. Which is merely to say that the reality principle of the ego has not yet won over the mind of the adult. The pleasure principle in the form of the wish undermines the ability of the ego to master reality. Since the condition of a person does not change with respect to his fundamental helplessness from infancy to adulthood, an entire society is tempted to universalize the wish for deliverance from natural evil. The objectless wish gets ignorantly baptized with the name "religion."

In his *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud hoped that human culture had traveled far enough along its journey of rationality and science that it could soon dispense with such archaic wishes. Instead of mindless repetition of obsessive actions like prayer that leave the world no safer than before, perhaps a young generation schooled in a non-religious atmosphere could reshape the world without illusions. Instead of dreaming of unlikely pie in the sky, humans would then simply have to face up to the terrors that remained after science had done its utmost to hold nature at bay. Like Job, and unlike his Deuteronomic comforters, the man without illusions must take on and endure what the universe dishes out without mythological pacifiers. He must accept the mantle of a Stoic sage.

This is the Freud that Küng summarizes in the first half of his book. When we get to the Critique, we find that there is just one essential systematic criticism of Freud's philosophy of religion offered. Even that one, he admits, has already been ceded by Freud himself. Küng points out that a wishful belief, projected, may be compatible with the existence of the object of that wish. Of course. The glass slipper may be a perfect fit. The prince may come to the rescue of Cinderella. But would it be reasonable for her to think he will?

Granted that Freud has not eliminated the possibility that a projective belief has a real object "out there," does Küng have a positive proof to exploit the loophole left by the Freudian criticism?

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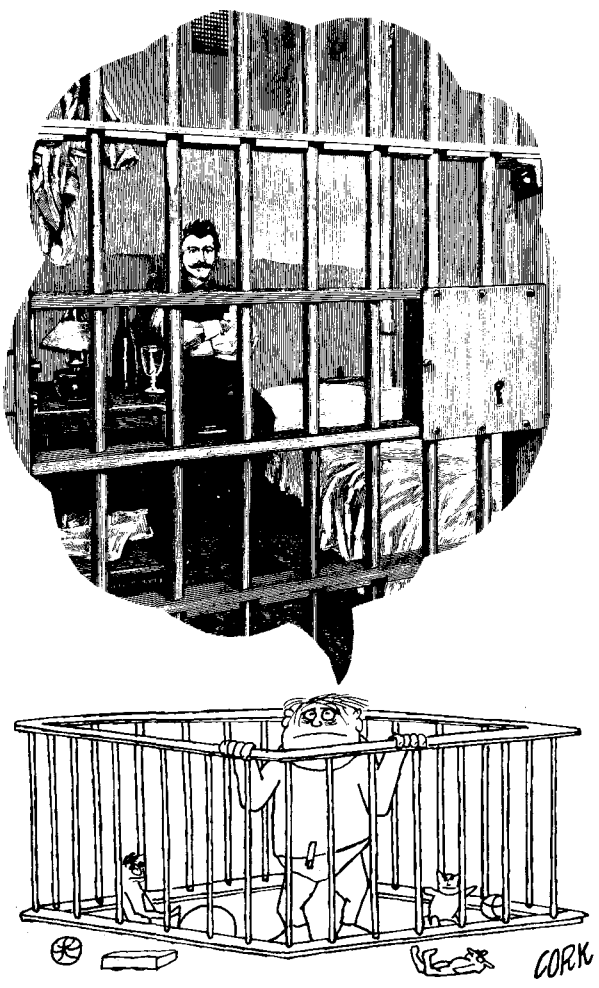
I wish I could answer that question in a forthright way. *Freud and the Problem of God* hints that such a proof can be given. For example, the last sentence of the book declares that Küng, as a Christian, has an answer for a question that stopped Freud cold. Freud, trying to respond to a correspondent who asked him why he remained a decent man in a morally bankrupt world, confessed his inability to answer. Here I cannot help but think this serious priest has simply passed over a piece of typical Freudian irony. I am reinforced in my conviction that Küng did not read what Freud meant by another—and egregious—example. Küng thinks that Freud, late in life, when writing to Einstein on the topic of war, finally discovered non-sexual love, *agape* rather than *Eros*. Küng writes of Freud that "Man was now a being essentially related to others, driven by vital instincts. . . . Life and love belong together and *are more deeply rooted than all sexuality*." (italics mine) Not only does Küng ignore the death instinct, he fails to discern that Freud is simply speaking of a political sublimation of Eros, a sublimation within which the sexual aim is deeply inhibited. But sexuality is still there, untranscended, even though modified by its vicissitudes.

But, generally, Küng is a fairly reliable summary guide to Freud on religion. What attracts him most is Freud's dedication to honesty and reason. It is this commitment that accounts, in my opinion, for Küng's being so "respectful and adulatory" toward Freud. Both of them are quite at one in rejecting the merely mystical and affective and in embracing instead an unswerving rationality.

* * *

If I had, for some reason, to classify theologians into two, and only two, groupings, I would choose this pair: mystics and rationalists. The larger number of contemporary theologians, those who accept the Kantian demolition of the old rational proofs of God's existence, have to be classified as mystics. And by "mystic" I simply mean that with respect to God and his major attributes, they are quite resigned to the fact that reason is silent. Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" and Paul Tillich's "God above God" are prime exhibits of the posture that reason stretched to the breaking point and gasping for breath is finally annulled by a moment of revelation that grasps the seeker from above. If this moment happens, it happens not because of the efficacy of the believer's intellect but because of the outreach of a God who transcends the arguments of the philosophers. The usual name for this group of theologians, those who share the post-Kantian misology, is the theological existentialists. They tend to be Protestant Christians, more Augustinian than Thomistic in their sympathies.



The second group of theologians, comprising some, but not all, Catholic Christians, tend to view theological existentialism with alarm. Their position is pre-Kantian and neo-Thomist. St. Thomas Aquinas, following the model of Aristotle, held that unaided reason, deriving its conclusions strictly from the data of sense observation, could establish some demonstrated truths about God, as, for example, the truth that he exists. Meanwhile faith and revelation, deriving not from sense observation but from miraculous and eternal events sent from above and taught through his Church, independently establish the existence of God. Faith goes beyond reason to underwrite additional vital truths about God's attributes about which reason is silent. The two modes of information about God run along parallel, separate paths toward the same objective. And though revelation outstrips the reach of finite reason, still there is never any inconsistency between what is revealed by faith and what is discovered by reason. (The explanation offered is that the revelation that is above reason is still rational but the apprehension of its rationality is beyond the competence of a finite subject. An angel could be expected to do better.)

My guess is that Küng's bearing is so respectful toward Freud because Freud's so-called atheism is no threat at all to a partisan of "critical rationality" (as Küng labels himself). Indeed, Freud's uncompromising insistence on rationality rather than affectivity is just the right kind of antidote for what Küng finds so lacking in those (mostly) Protestant thinkers who have deserted reason for a dangerously irrational mysticism. If Freud's criticism has destroyed the God who is a mystical Father, merely a displacement-symbol, an immature fantasy-substitute, so much the better. The way is still open for a reasoned approach to the reality of God. This point is well illustrated, I think, by what Küng writes of Barth's conception of God as "wholly Other"

> we see . . . how often Christians and theologians have been in danger of devaluing the conclusions of reason, in order to revalue faith—a specific form of hostility to reason *which does not seem in any way to be required by Christian faith*. (italics mine)

It is hard to imagine a more forthright rejection of theological existentialism in favor of theological rationalism. Moreover the quotation marks a critically ambiguous juncture in Küng's theology. Could Küng actually think it possible to rejuvenate the venerable medieval scheme of paral-

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leling the tracks of reason and revelation such that the existence of God emerges as demonstrated fact? Here it sounds like he does.

Beyond any doubt he wants to anathematize the mystics, the theological existentialists from Pascal onward, who desert reason in despair in order to find another brand of discourse that leads them to God. The point of the anathema is well taken. It amounts to an old familiar criticism. If the God of theological existentialism is totally, absolutely transcendent, if he is wholly other than human, then such a God is also totally, absolutely irrelevant to human reality and concerns. Such a God can hardly be a God of love or justice since those very terms are freighted with implications of human social relationships and human emotions. Consequently those "good attributes" must be entirely meaningless when they are applied to a fully transcendent Other.

I doubt that I read too speculatively between the lines when I find Küng at one with Freud in endorsing the rational ego and the reality-principle that is its hallmark. It explains—fairly satisfactorily—why Küng is so much at ease in the Freudian Zion. For the God that Freudian atheism calls in question is merely the "God above God" of the theological existentialists, leaving quite untouched, even strengthened and purified, the God of "critical rationality."

And I might end here, content with having solved, at least to my own satisfaction, the mystery of Küng's devotion to Freudian rational "atheism." But there are loose ends in Küng's book that will not fit, try as I may.

* * *

One of the most important is this. Having devoted so much of *Freud and the Problem of God* to expositing the psychoanalytic analysis of religion, Küng, in his Critique, executes a puzzling turnaround. Pointing out—accurately enough—that Freud was an atheist before he invented psychoanalysis, Küng proceeds to declare that Freudian atheism is not genuinely intrinsic to psychoanalysis but "remains . . . a purely personal basic attitude and *has nothing to do with psychoanalysis as such.*" (italics mine) This is a mischievous and thoroughly mistaken conclusion.

I think it is obvious that the atheism of psychoanalysis is inherent in the principles upon which it is founded, Those principles, admittedly, are speculative. At bottom, they make Eros and Thanatos, Life and Death, together, the driving forces that shape the human being into the creature he becomes. Derived from his phylogenetic heritage, they are reinforced first in the family then in the culture in which he makes himself and is made. These instinctual drives can only be modified and diverted by the civilized surround. And that surround consists of a set of repressive forces that bend without breaking those original drives which remain eternally what they began to be originally. We are literally the expressions of our drives. Our culture, including religions, both represents the repressive forces and also presents a mask disguised by their repression. Therapy leads at best to the ego's recollection of the formerly unconscious knowledge of the history of drive-shaping and that recollection issues in resignation. For this inclusive instinct theory, religion is a cultural artifact that reduces to a sign of ego-immaturity.

Religion is a cheap cure for neurosis that is sure to backfire given time. What is essentially wrong with it is this: When one asks, as a child inevitably will, Is this fairy-tale true?, intellect begins to undermine faith. The former believer is worse off now than when he began. We may as well be honest with ourselves, Freud maintains, and deliberately jettison the illusions. We will use science to alleviate the pains of existence, while enduring the overplus until life is extinguished. The Freudian atheism is, naturally, a backward-looking lifting of the veil. But it is more. It is a prospect not merely a retrospect. Irrational hope for the future is dashed, but a matured, resigned, and realistic human being now faces the future armed with tragic knowledge.

Whether Küng's failure to sense that Freud's atheism is intrinsic to his psychology rather than a mere personal idiosyncrasy is an unconsciously defensive move or a simple misunderstanding—or both—need not be settled here. Whatever the exact reason may be, the puzzling denial of the relevance of Freudian psychoanalysis to the atheism that Freud derived from it shows that Küng has shied away from fully confronting the whole threat posed by reductive depth psychology to the intellectual underpinnings of conventional religion.

Another, and I take it an even more distressing puzzle about Küng's approach to the Freudian challenge, is this: Having bet his theological life on the loophole in Freudian atheism, that God's existence has not been disproven, it is up to Küng to provide a positive content for the Christian's confidence that God exists. Just how is Küng able to convince us that a logical possibility can be transformed into a demonstrable certainty? There is really very little to go on in *Freud and the Problem of God.* So little that this reviewer was driven to supplement the hints with a section on "The Reality of God," from Küng's *The Christian Challenge.* Though most of this larger book is devoted to pastoral advice to the faithful, the noted section attempts to provide a philosophical defense for the existence of God.

It may be that Küng's treatment of the problem is either easy to misread or somewhat incoherent; at least I had some trouble in deciding precisely where he stood. His defense seems to boil down to this: It is impossible to prove either the existence or the non-existence of God. The atheists cannot exclude the theists. The theists cannot exclude the atheists. Both, claims Küng, have to recognize the "radical uncertainty" of every ordinary reality. Both must recognize the inability of what factually exists to provide its own reason for existing (this sounds like the Thomistic argument that contingency must imply necessity). Both camps must ultimately *decide,* the one against God and the other for him. At this point, we seem to have reached familiar stalemate. The logic of the argument suggests that Küng is forced either to embrace a skeptical agnosticism or to follow the theological existentialist in a "leap of faith." Or, to put it otherwise, "critical rationality" would lead either to radical uncertainty or to mysticism. But no. One cannot remain "indifferent." One must "trust" something. The atheist who trusts an uncertain, unsubstantiated reality opens himself to emptiness and despair. The theist trusts a "primal reason," God, as the "condition of the possibility" of reality and, in so doing, displays a "critical rationality."

How this procedure eludes the agnostic standoff between atheist and theist—with the help of "critical ra-

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tionality"—just entirely escapes me. However frustrating such suspension of judgment may be affectively and humanly, the result, so far as reason is concerned, is still stalemate. Kant already made this point crystal clear many years ago.

Looking back at the argument, however, a suspicion began to grow in me. Checking my recollection of William James' essay "The Will to Believe" confirmed the suspicion. James, finding himself in the same stalemate as Küng with respect to the rational equipollence of the atheistic and theistic arguments, found a way to break the deadlock. James says that, unlike mundane choices, the choice for God is a "forced" and "momentous" option, one to which we cannot be indifferent. James chooses to become a theist because

> . . . a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule.

So, while I do not claim that Küng deliberately adapted James' pragmatism to his stalemate problem, it does seem to me that, in essence, his critical rationality amounts to no more than a reprise of James' religious pragmatism.

But, if I happen to be right that Küng's "critical rationality" is simply a version of Jamesian voluntarism in religion, I end up in a most peculiar situation. As pointed out above, Küng wants nothing to do with "irrationalism" in religion, deliberately putting distance between himself and the line of thinkers that leads from Pascal to Tillich and Barth. But it is James—and by inference, Küng, too—who describes himself as carrying out Pascal's sobriquet that "The heart has reasons that reason can never know." This is "reason" in only the most Pickwickian of senses. Küng and James are together saying that we *decide* for God in the absence of any compelling rational reason to do so. And this lands Küng right back in the camp of the theological existentialists, precisely what (as I reported earlier in this review) Küng's critical rationality was poised against. Either Küng's position is incoherent or I have done him a monstrous injustice by failing to penetrate the "rationality" of critical rationality.

* * *

Perhaps I compound the injustice, if it be that, by speculating still further about Küng's plan in *Freud and the Problem of God*. Did he fasten on Freud's atheism as merely "personal," rather than intrinsic to psychoanalysis, so that he could simply assign Freud to the group of those who irrationally elect atheism when presented with a "forced option?" Has Freud adopted a form of James' rule that "absolutely prevented" him from grasping a truth that happens to be undemonstrable? Perhaps. On the other hand, Küng has *decided* for God on the basis of James' rule. His justification would have to be that this is an extraordinary "reason" from the heart.

Should this reconstruction of mine hold water, Küng would have attempted to appropriate the best of both the rational and existential theological worlds. As a rationalist, he would be able to show that God's existence could be rationally demonstrated, just as an old-fashioned Thomism provided. As an existentialist of the Jamesian stripe he would be able freely to will the positive side of this momentous option.

If something like this has really happened in *Freud and the Problem of God*, then Küng is sailing theologically under false colors. One can be a theological rationalist or a theological existentialist. One cannot be both simultaneously. For the two positions are as opposed, their respective deities as incompatible, as theism and atheism themselves. Not that some inventive theologian might not craft an ingenious dialectical combination of the two. But this is not what Father Küng has done. He has taken an overt stance of rationalism while covertly celebrating the mystical "wager" of Pascal and James. Worst of all, his whole treatment of the subject implies it is the God of the existentialists who is struck a mortal blow by Freud's atheism.

As for Freud, I can only imagine that he would assess Küng's attempt to appropriate psychoanalysis for theological purposes with a certain amused tolerance along with impatience for the details. Freud was serenely certain in *Illusion* that he had isolated the root of religious longing in the ordinary person. The attempt of theologians to refine and systematize the crudities of ordinary religious beliefs struck him as so much empty verbiage.

In the end, though, Freud himself was a man of faith in spite of all paradox. His cause and private obsession, shared only with the Committee and a few of the lesser faithful, was the cosmology of psychoanalysis, a manichean myth of the original sin and its cultural consequences. Far from being the impartial scientific instrument that he sometimes claimed it to be, psychoanalysis was for him a religion of the cultural that aimed to explain the whole meaning of life.

Writing to Oskar Pfister, the first staunch Freudian who remained a believing Christian, Freud said

> I do not know if you have detected the secret link between the *Lay Analysis* and the *Illusion*. In the former I wish to protect analysis from the doctors and in the latter from the priests. I should like to hand it over to a profession which does not yet exist, a profession of *lay* curers of souls who need not be doctors and should not be priests.

Father Küng might protest.

—Thomas H. Thompson

SF: Mapping the Territory

The *Alternatives* Series. General eds., Eric S. Rabkin, Martin H. Greenberg, and Joseph D. Olander. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

1. *Astounding Science Fiction: July, 1939* [facsimile reproduction]. As edited by John W. Campbell, Jr. Memoirs edited by Martin H. Greenberg. Foreword by Stanley Schmidt. 1966, 1981. $12.95.

2. *The Science Fiction of Mark Clifton*. Eds., Barry N. Malzberg and Martin H. Greenberg. 1980. $15.

3. *Fantastic Lives: Autobiographical Essays by Notable Science Fiction Writers*. Ed., Martin H. Greenberg. 1981. $15.

4. *Bridges to Science Fiction*. Eds., George E. Slusser, George R. Guffey, and Mark Rose. 1980. $9.95.

Introspection is a bug-bear that affects most genres of popular culture once the purveyors and consumers of the genre begin to take themselves seriously. Usually this introspection takes as its point of departure attempts to define historically just exactly what the genre *is*; then through the establishment of rules for inclusion and exclusion it tries to demarcate those practitioners who belong (or don't belong) in the genre.

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Science Fiction has been experiencing such growing pains for some time now, and the first four titles issued by Southern Illinois University Press in its continuing "Alternatives" series on SF all show this introspective fixation.

The clearest example is *Astounding Science Fiction: July, 1939*, a facsimile reprint of "the first 'great' issue" of that classic SF pulp "produced under the editorship of John W. Campbell, Jr." To view this facsimile (which sells for $12.95 a copy) of a magazine which sold for twenty cents four decades ago evokes the old SF buff's nostalgia in the same way that a glance at the top-ten record charts for any week in the late '30s will lump up the throat of an aging jitterbug.

The experience is highly illuminating.

For SF historians, the association of John Campbell's editorship with *Astounding* stands as *the* event in the "Golden Age" of science fiction. Campbell's *Astounding* is revered for giving birth to much of the early work of such major SF authors as Robert Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, Isaac Asimov, and A.E. van Vogt. The particular issue here reprinted contains, in fact, the first stories published in *Astounding* by both Asimov and van Vogt.

But the sensitive reader will be quick to surmise that, for all the hoary legends citing it as the mother lode of the Golden Age of SF, *Astounding* was no Megalia Nugget. "Trends," the Asimov story, is talky, wooden, and dull, featuring a first voyager to the moon who engages in conversations that make actual astronautese sound lucid and unpretentious:

> "I'm going to try again, men . . . and I may not make it, but for that I don't care. . . . I'll be shooting through the void at last, and the dream of mankind will come true. Out around the Moon and back; the first to see the other side. It's worth the chance."
>
> "You won't have fuel enough to land on the Moon, boss, which is a pity."

Asimov has come a good long way since 1939; exhuming this corpse of a story simply demonstrates the truth of his autobiography's statement: "I . . . rose only little by little. I was virtually unnoticed for a while. . . ."

"Black Destroyer," the van Vogt story, is perhaps even more of a shock. "Trends" is hardly a standard text—even among true-blue SF fans, but "Black Destroyer" is a work remembered fondly by most cognoscenti, primarily because it eventually formed the first section of *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*, a classic of the genre.

No long-standing SF fan has not read *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*, and few of them are likely to forget the black horror of Coeurl, the last of his species, an intelligent feline monster who must eat living flesh to survive. "Black Destroyer," the version published under the vaunted editorial eye of Campbell, begins:

> On and on Coeurl prowled! . . . Grim reddish dawn . . . crept up from his left. A vague, dull light, it was, that gave no sense of approaching warmth, no comfort, nothing but a cold, diffuse lightness, slowly revealing a nightmare landscape.
>
> Black, jagged rock and black, unliving plain took form around him, as a pale-red sun peered at last above the grotesque horizon. It was then Coeurl recognized suddenly that he was on familiar ground.

Now there are few who would proclaim van Vogt a prose stylist. Yet, by 1950, he had altered this passage for publication in *Space Beagle* to:

> On and on Coeurl prowled . . . Grim reddish dawn . . . crept up from his left. It was a vague light that gave no sense of approaching warmth. It slowly revealed a nightmare landscape.
>
> Jagged black rock and a black, lifeless plain took form around him. A pale red sun peered above the grotesque horizon. Fingers of light probed among the shadows. And still there was no sign of the family of id creatures that he had been trailing now for nearly a hundred days.

Similar comparisons can be found in nearly every paragraph of the two versions, and the contrast is reinforced by the appearance in *Space Beagle* of the dominant human character, Grosvenor, who is totally absent from "Black Destroyer." To those who remember the novel's episode with fondness, the effect of reading the *Astounding* version is like knocking down a shot glass some prankster has filled with maple syrup.

None of this is to say that this facsimile edition of a 40 year old pulp has no value; it does, but the value is hardly esthetic.

Like the Blickling Homilies, to cite a random example, the facsimile does much more to establish a context than it does to arouse literary excitement. Thus it goes far to moderate the credulity of the modern student of SF who keeps hearing the old buffs moon about the times "when every issue of *Astounding* was a great new adventure." The book *does* exemplify what science fiction was in the early days of the "Golden Age," and in that sense, at least, scholars and historians may cheer its publication.

* * *

If the *Astounding* facsimile represents, in a sense, the origins of modern SF, *The Science Fiction of Mark Clifton* marks a progress. Clifton was a significant author in the genre in the 1950s. He won the Hugo Award, the major honor bestowed by SF fandom, in 1955, and—according to his erudite editor, Barry Malzberg—"changed the field irrevocably, proving to be one of the twelve most influential writers of science fiction during its fifty-four-year commercial publishing history." One may quibble with the precision of Malzberg's evaluation, but the fact is that he knows the SF field about as well as anyone, and he's not ordinarily given to hyperbole in discussing others.

If Clifton's stories anthologized here are seldom high art in any absolute sense, their literacy is a majestic leap forward from the *Astounding* pulp. Moreover, there is a haunting bleakness in many of the stories that, at least to some extent, signals the pessimism which eventually came to characterize so much of the SF of the decade following Clifton's death in 1963.

Significantly for the 'fifties in which most of these stories were written, Clifton tends to focus on bright and decent people, often supernaturally gifted ones, who are stupidly bound by the constraints of society, or completely snared in the red tape of a monstrous bureaucracy. Even when these stories end happily for the gifted victim—as "Star, Bright" does—the happiness lies in an *escape* from society, not a reconciliation with it; the society itself doesn't change.

This focus gives Clifton's stories a modernity that belies their age. "Star, Bright," with its stress on society's attempts to inhibit its most talented members, anticipates Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" by nine years. "What Thin Partitions" presents a nursery-school girl, gifted with the power to move objects and to start fires through mental effort alone. Terrified by others' fearful

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reactions to her powers, the child decides to be a "good girl," only to have a personnel expert hired by the government use technological sophistication to frighten her into manifesting the powers again. It's difficult not to see the story as an influence (albeit perhaps unconscious) on Stephen King's recent bestseller, *Firestarter*, and the story is made even more poignant through being told from the point of view of the personnel expert, himself a victim of the bureaucracy, who hates himself for what he does.

It is Clifton's pessimism, rather than any notable stylistic innovations, which signals his departure from Campbellian "Golden Age" SF and which foreshadows the more experimental science fiction which was to bloom during the 'sixties. In an editorial note to one of the few stories in the anthology with a marginally upbeat conclusion, Malzberg points out that the story was written for "the imperious John W. Campbell, Jr., *Astounding's* editor. . . . It can be reasonably assumed that Campbell either insisted on the ending or that Clifton tacked it on before submission as a kind of self-censorship to insure the sale of the story."

But if Clifton's stories are *good* (and, with a qualification or two, they are), and if they're historically important to the SF field (and they certainly are that), why aren't they better known? Malzberg provides the answer: "Clifton . . . died intestate, Because of this, publishers and anthologists found his works extremely difficult to procure, and consequently, he fell totally out of print almost immediately after his death." Sadly, Malzberg adds, "Mark Clifton—a major writer of his time, innovator who made a lasting impression on his field, winner of a major award—earned for the totality of his science fiction something considerably less than twenty thousand dollars."

* * *

The contributing authors to *Fantastic Lives: Autobiographical Essays by Notable Science Fiction Writers* are Harlan Ellison, Philip Jose Farmer, R.A. Lafferty, Katherine MacLean, Malzberg, Mack Reynolds, Margaret St. Clair, Norman Spinrad, and van Vogt. The basis for selecting these authors and not others seems elusive. They're a mixed bag, but all are currently active—at least to some extent—in the SF field, and all save van Vogt are writers whose significance to science fiction flourished (more or less) in the 1960s. For the most part, they know where modern science fiction comes from and how it got to where it is, but their interests (appropriately) focus on what's happening now. While still touching on the history of SF, they move beyond the purely historical to focus on the inclusion-exclusion principles so dear to those interested in the genres of modern popular culture.

"Science fiction writers," says Kurt Vonnegut in *Wampeters, Foma, and Granfalloons*, "are joiners. They are a lodge. . . . They love to stay up all night, arguing the question, 'What is science fiction?' One might as usefully inquire, 'What are the Elks? And what is the Order of the Eastern Star?' " A good many answers to the question, "What is science fiction?" are in *Fantastic Lives*, and many of them (naturally enough) hark back to the puniness of Mark Clifton's reward for being a major science fiction writer. Malzberg himself calls SF a "genre market," the particular publishing market he chose to enter after finding it impossible to break through the conservative strictures that tended to lock new writers out of the literary mainstream. "Science fiction seemed to be that field in which one could sell stories of modest literary intention with the least amount of slanting; one could, if one touched the base of structure, be paid a living wage for somewhat ambitious work. Historically the field has been open to new writers and approaches in a way that, say, the mystery never has been." So there is "serious literature" on the one hand and a series of popular markets for fiction on the other; science fiction is one of the latter. Malzberg goes on to note that, despite its advantages of easy entry for ambitious and experimental new writers, it pays them poorly and—like other fields of commercial writing—tends to burn them out after about ten years. Thus, says Malzberg, he has retired from the field.

Spinrad, while noting that some SF writers have sought to "break out" of the category, and that others have sought to ostracize colleagues who didn't clearly label their works "sf," sees the result of such argument as "mostly heat and hot air": "Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, and Barry Malzberg have from time to time (usually in fanzines and at science fiction conventions!) loudly announced their 'retirement' from 'sf' and Kurt Vonnegut beligerantly [*sic*] declares that he is 'not a science fiction writer' while continuing to write the stuff. . . . Even those who are desperate to 'break out of the category' give credence to it by continuing to think in literary terms." For Spinrad, "*every* novel undergoes . . . genre categorization," and one of the categories is that of "best seller." Literary ambition or intent seem to have nothing to do with the matter. For Spinrad, the categorization of the *work* is not important; an SF book should be so categorized, as should a best seller. What is important is that the writer not permit himself or herself to be so categorized. Thus, he concludes, "I'm not a 'science fiction writer.' . . . I write 'science fiction.' "

While there is a certain irony in these non-science fiction writers and retirees from the field producing self-revelatory pieces for a volume subtitled *Autobiographical Essays by Notable Science Fiction Writers*, the authors' concern is illuminating to the student of SF. Scholars of science fiction are fond of attempting to define the genre on the basis of its literary nature; the authors of the texts the scholars are analyzing tend, by and large, to think of it in relation to its significance for book sales. And the fans (which group includes some scholars and some authors) continue to see it, in Vonnegut's terms, as a lodge or as a family. The disagreement among these groups, all of which overlap to some extent, contributes considerably to the heat and smoke that emanates from science fiction these days—though there's an admitted paucity of light.

Naturally, some of the authors consider SF as something other than a publisher's category. R.A. Lafferty says it is "the possible bridge between the 'two cultures'," but then goes on to add that "mainly SF is an enjoyment." Margaret St. Clair's position is even more laid back: "I'm really not a fan of science fiction at all. . . . It has more possibilities, more freedom, than most kinds of fiction. It has led human attention into areas of experience that might not otherwise have been explored. But apart from this, I don't find it much more admirable than detective fiction, or fantasy, or westerns. Or pornography."

In other of these essays, the authors seem to be engaged in freely-associative romps through their pasts. Farmer's reaches the point of his first

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SF sale, and then ends with the statement, "Part 2, dealing with the years 1952-80, will appear in a later book in this series. Or, if not there, somewhere."

Ultimately, the essays in *Fantastic Lives* are likely to be of greatest interest to two groups of people. The first comprises the SF freaks; they, more than the buffs of most other popular genres (rock music is a notable exception), love to have a feeling of intimacy with the purveyors of what they consume. The second is made up of other SF writers, new ones in particular, who are interested in plotting career strategies.

The two major exceptions are the essays of Lafferty and Ellison.

* * *

Lafferty's "The Case of the Moth-eaten Magician" makes my own comments on Campbell, above, seem positively gentle. In peeling the noted editor of *Astounding* ("It wasn't just that the emperor hadn't any clothes. He hadn't any skin even. He was plain obscene."), Lafferty lets the air out of most of the pompous truisms regarding SF. He lumps the revered names of the Campbell stable—including van Vogt, Asimov, Heinlein, and Sturgeon—into a group whose members "were and are undistinguishable from one another." He lambastes Heinlein, "this tedious pusher of fascism-for-boys," in an hilarious account of that author's "apotheosis" at the 1976 World Science Fiction Convention. (While Heinlein gave a hawkish speech, a majority of the audience awaited the arrival of God, Who would pay proper tribute to the Dean of SF; they "were rolling their eyes up. . . and muttering 'Oh God oh God oh God!' as the thing dragged on and on.") He cites three of the most prominent editors current in the field—Silverberg, Lester Del Rey, and Frederik Pohl—as prime forces in dragging science fiction back to 1946. ("I don't know why they wanted to drag the field back to such an inferior year as 1946, but it's a year that suits them better than it suits most other people.") He cheerily and wittily demolishes the SF authors' code: Thou Shalt Not Speak Disparagingly of Thy Colleagues' Work—at Least in Public.

Unlike Lafferty, Ellison barely bends the authors' code in his essay; nevertheless, between the two of them they pretty much succeed in castigating the world at large. Lafferty takes on SF authors, while Ellison takes on nearly everyone else—liberals, conservatives, Nazis, fast readers, an odd film director, and academic critics—*especially* academic critics.

Like Lafferty, Ellison writes a funny shtick; if his piece seems more waspish and somewhat meaner to me than Lafferty's, it's perhaps merely a question of my own ox receiving the wound. (Still, telling a Jesuit who had just finished reading before a scholarly audience a flattering essay about one of Ellison's stories, with which essay Ellison disagreed, "Father, I think you're stuffed right full of wild blueberry muffins," and then cackling about the triumph in print does seem a bit harsh.)

Ellison takes as his point of departure a considerable pride in the deserved popularity of his story, "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream." While acknowledging that he enjoys the ego-boost he gets from the critical attention the story has received from Academia, he despises "the worshipful nitpicking of junior professors determined to

publish-or-perish through manipulations of contemporary fantasists." (Ellison seems to feel that if SF writers are called "fantasists" and the field renamed "imaginative fiction" things will, on the whole, go much better.)

Ellison's concerns about the ministrations of academics are well-founded. SF *is* a field in which the worried and untenured can find the solace of reasonably easy publication; as a result, the field—by whatever name one wishes to call it—has taken on a good deal of academic interest, some of it quite jejune. Further, as this academic interest has grown, writers and critics have tended to get altogether too chummy. Many of the writers delight in being taken seriously by serious readers for a change, and many of the scholars become almost groupie-like in their fascination with authors. One of the more well-known SF scholars has even called for a tightening of this incestuous bond, reminding academicians that they and writers "exist in a symbiotic relationship."

Ellison goes far to counter that notion, seeing it as dangerous to authorial integrity and—at least by implication—to critical substance as well. He makes several salient points along the way. First, in his objections to the heavy academic freighting the Jesuit attempted to lay on his story, he clarifies the danger of the academicians imposing "constructs of . . . vast erudition (and prolix woolgathering)" on works which may be entirely unsuited to such constructs. Second, by jubilantly catching the priest's failure to recognize the blackness of one of the central characters, Ellison demonstrates the danger in much academic criticism of SF, which (like much other criticism) too often ignores the obvious in its pursuit after the arcane. Finally, by having the courage to offer his own reading of his own story, Ellison offers an instance of the importance of criticism to the better works of SF.

In brief, Ellison explains that in his story a giant computer "represents. . . the dichotomous nature of the human race. . . and that includes the demon in us." This computer delights in torturing its human captives, whom it can keep alive indefinitely for no other purpose than to suffer. At the story's end, only two of the captives are alive, and one kills the other to prevent her continued suffering, thus accepting for himself an eternity of *solitary* torment. "*It is an upbeat ending,*" Ellison screams in italics, "infinitely hopeful and positive" because it involves a selfless sacrifice. But Ellison makes no comment on the fact that, by his own stipulation, that last and decent human being faces an eternity of agony imposed on him by a machine which is *itself* representative of the human race.

The point, of course, is not to deny Ellison's insight into his own story nor even to quibble seriously about interpretation. The point is that Ellison's interpretation of the story's conclusion places great stress on the fact that the computer in some way represents mankind, and even more stress on the endlessness of the torment the survivor faces; thus, in at least one obvious sense, human cruelty continues forever when

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human sacrifice is no longer even possible. If Ellison's reading is to be upheld, the point needs to be treated, and it's not. Authors as critics of their own works may be too close to their own intentions to see the problems authors as authors necessarily create when they produce a work of art worthy of the name. While this sort of point has been bandied about between authors and critics from time immemorial, the inbreeding of writers and interpreters in the SF field cries out for an occasional eruption like Ellison's.

* * *

The fourth book in the series, *Bridges to Science Fiction*, draws in the academy with all its lumber. The volume includes ten essays, nine of them by scholars of literature; the lone exception, Gregory Benford, is a professor of physics and a writer of science fiction. The essays all stem from the Eaton Conference on Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature held at the University of California, Riverside, in 1979, and they represent the big guns of academia.

To begin with, there's Harry Levin, author of *The Overreacher*, one of *the* standard texts on Christopher Marlowe. In that Marlowe book, Levin devoted one chapter to "Science Without Conscience"; in "Science and Fiction," his essay in the book at hand, Levin traces patterns of relationships among fabulations, science, and pseudo-science from classical times to the present. The development of the "new science," says Levin, raised "the question, which would pulsate back and forth from *King Lear* through Thomas Hardy, of nature's indifference to mankind." But he adds that "science-fiction battens on pseudo-science," and offers a concluding admonitory note: "Personally, I remain enough of a skeptical rationalist to feel somewhat uneasy over the cultural currents that have been remystifying and remythologizing our precarious century. Our technorevolutions seem to foster, not so much a rule of reason, as an efflorescence of credulity."

Levin thus lays the groundwork for later essays, like Robert Hunt's "Visionary States and the Search for Transcendence in Science Fiction," which fly in the face of this warning and yet, paradoxically, exemplify it. Hunt, for example argues that "science fiction is particularly suited to the depiction of visionary states and the religious revelations they seem to bring." The pseudo-science and credulity which make Levin uneasy are, in the forms of "telepathy, clairvoyance, and other 'psi' powers," placed happily by Hunt in "science fiction's Great Tradition." In one sense, the apparent conflict of ideas between Levin and Hunt may seem no more significant than that, say between Spinrad and Malzberg in *Fantastic Lives*. But it is. The issue between Malzberg and Spinrad involves a career strategy, a marketing technique. The argument implicit between Levin and Hunt is much more consuming; it involves positions on science and spirit, their role in that variety of modern literature called science fiction, and the significance of science fiction as a vision or reflection of contemporary thought.

Benford and Stephen W. Potts (who also writes SF), unlike Levin and Hunt, write mutually supporting essays which take rationalism as their points of departure. For Benford, the rationalism is that of modern science, and for Potts it is that of Locke and his followers; but for both, as they trace their brands of rationalism through modern science fiction, the terminus is Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris*, with its presentation, not of the unknown, but of the truly unknowable.

Four of the essays approach the question of genre definition through comparison with related literary areas: Eric S. Rabkin writes of "Fairy Tales and Science Fiction," Patrick Parrinder of "Science Fiction as Truncated Epic," Thomas H. Keeling of "Science Fiction and the Gothic," and Thomas A. Hanzo, in "The Past of Science Fiction," considers the techniques by which SF presents the future as "historical." All four of these essays are instructive, and Rabkin's and Parrinder's in particular reveal why each must be considered at the forefront of SF scholarship.

In fact, there are no weak essays in this book—though Kent T. Kraft's "Incorporating Divinity: Platonic Science Fiction in the Middle Ages" does hang in the book rather like a vermiform appendix. Unlike the other "tracers of lost history" in *Bridges*, Kraft does little to relate the "Medieval SF" of his title to the current (and in most senses the "true") science fiction field. He refers to only one modern fiction, a work by Borges, and cites none at all.

It seems to the point that of all these essays, only Carl D. Malmgren's "Philip Dick's *Man in the High Castle* and the Nature of Science-Fictional Worlds" even *appears* to focus on a specific text—and the appearance is somewhat misleading. Roughly half the essay is devoted to Dick's great novel; the rest jumps through a series of comparisons with other writers.

It is true that genre definitions are necessary and wholesome endeavors, as are tracings of analogues, sources, and influences. But a series as ambitious as this one will eventually have to begin focusing critical attention on individual trees, rather than continuing surveys of the forest from ever more divergent viewpoints. Presumably, future publications in the series will begin to undertake this task.

In the meantime, all four books do have a synergestic value. To view them together is, in a sense, to see a rough map of modern science fiction.

–Thomas J. Remington

Small *Isn't* Beautiful?

Energy in America (Proceedings of a Conference Sponsored by the Center for the Study of the American Experience, May, 1979), Transaction Press, Rutgers. Unpriced.

The casual browser of commercial and university book stores cannot help noticing that trade books on the subject of energy tend to support a particular point of view. E.F. Schumacher's slogan that "small is beautiful," and Anthony Lovins' advocacy of "soft energy paths," together express the essence of this apparent consensus. It is easy to find trade books on small wind power systems and on solar heated homes. It is also easy to find sensational accounts of the hazards of nuclear power. It is much more difficult to find anything about the hazards of coal burning or about developing high technology options such as fusion power, MHD coal conversion, or advanced batteries for energy storage and for automotive transportation.

This evident consensus is mis-

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leading. Dispersed, low technology energy options do not loom very large in the energy scenarios being seriously considered within academic schools of business and economics, or within the boardrooms of corporate America. The fifteen essays and discussions reproduced in *Energy in America* offer a useful corrective to the weight of informed lay opinion by providing a representative cross section of thinking about the energy problem from *within* the corporate power structure.

The book also (unintentionally) illustrates how rapidly the energy situation is changing. These papers were presented at a conference held during May of 1979. The organizing theme was "America in an Era of Plentiful although Higher Priced Energy." The leading idea was that at a price about double that being paid for energy at the time of the conference, the supply would equal the demand and economic growth could proceed at a pace only slightly lower than the historical rate. The political goal of the organizers of the conference was evidently to lobby for decontrol of oil and gas prices. The oil decontrol and windfall profits tax bills were enacted into law within about a year of the conference, and today, in May of 1981, the international price of crude oil at $35 per barrel is almost exactly double what it was in 1979 (adjusted to 1979 dollars). The impact of these higher prices on supplies appears to have been what the conference organizers had predicted. Despite the lingering Iraq-Iran war, we find ourselves in the midst of a world-wide oil glut which is preventing OPEC from raising its prices much beyond the current rate. Energy shortages have been one problem the Reagan administration has *not* had to deal with during its first 100 days in office.

The conference participants were unified in their support of the organizing theme of the conference. But they were seriously split on another issue which will probably loom large in congressional debates and behind-the-scenes struggles for influence within the Reagan administration during the months ahead. These two factions might be called, respectively, the "mixed economy moderates," and the "free market purists."

* * *

The majority of the conference participants were mixed economy moderates. The conference chairman, Simon Ramo (the "R" of TRW), Henry Linden (President of the Gas Research Institute), and, perhaps surprisingly, John Swearingen (Chairman of the Board of Standard Oil), all identified themselves with this point of view. They all advocated large development programs in synthetic fuels and other advanced technologies, which would be supported by the government at taxpayer expense until most of the uncertainties had been eliminated, and which would then be turned over to private corporations to be exploited for profit.

The free market purists were represented mainly by J. Clayburn La Force (Board member of the Hoover Institution), and Arthur Bueche (Senior Vice President for Corporate Technology at General Electric). The purist position was nicely summarized by Bueche in response to a question about the appropriate role of government in the development of energy technology. "On the whole," said Bueche, "I think that government ought to clean up the regulations and get out of the way." This remark, which reminds one of President Reagan's campaign slogan about "getting government off the backs of the people," elicited spontaneous applause from the assembled audience.

J. Clayburn La Force's presentation consisted mainly of a review of the history of government regulation of the energy industry from 1935 up to the present day. He divided this time into two main periods. The first ran from 1935 up to 1971, when the goal was protection of domestic industry. The effect of these regulations, said La Force, was higher prices, and ". . . an energy lobby, a depletion allowance, and a lot of richer oil men." The second period was characterized by two conflicting tendencies. On the one hand, the political tide had turned against the crude oil producers and their protected profits. On the other, domestic sources of crude oil really did begin to become "depleted" relative to demand during this period, a circumstance which made us increasingly dependent on foreign sources of supply. The anti-big-oil sentiment generated price controls, whereas the real shortages generated rules governing allocations of supplies. The result was a confused hodgepodge of regulations with no coherent effect except to make us ever more dependent on foreign sources of supply, and to leave the large oil companies as rich and well-protected as ever. La Force concluded the energy crisis is a debacle created by government policy, and like Arthur Bueche, he recommended reliance on free market mechanisms as the sole solution to that difficulty.

* * *

La Force's conclusions were strongly challenged by Simon Ramo and Henry Linden during the discussion period. The trouble with reliance on the private sector and free market mechanisms alone, they argued, is that the "front end costs" involved in developing and deploying an entirely new technology is so great that private corporations will in most instances be unable to provide them. It is a fact of history that the most spectacular technological developments of our time (jet aircraft and microelectronics were examples mentioned during the discussion), were originally developed by the government as part of the defense budget.

But the most striking and memorable character among the presenters was John Swearingen, Chairman of the Board of Standard Oil. His writing style is reminiscent of a high school coach's half-time pep-talk. He bristles with a "can-do" optimism and drives home his points with pungent anecdotes and metaphors (e.g., "When one has his head in the sand, one is extremely vulnerable in other areas"). He even had the gall to feign puzzlement over why the government did not trust the oil companies to use their excess profits for the public good—as if La Force's sad tale of oil company profiteering at public expense had never been told. But one of his points was especially telling against the free market purists.

We probably could give the entire energy problem over to private enterprise, Swearingen conceded. But one function government cannot give away is that of national defense. If "free market forces" made us dependent on foreign sources of supply, those sources would have to be protected by an armed presence. What would it cost, he asked, to build and service sufficiently powerful Mediterranean and Indian Ocean fleets to protect our sources of supply in the Middle East? He guessed (conservatively!) that it would take between 25 and 50 billion dollars. For that amount of money one could

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launch a domestic synthetic fuels industry and develop other unconventional sources of energy as well. That argument brought this reader's mutterings about Swearingen's moral and political obdurateness to an abrupt halt. One does not deploy nuclear task forces to guarantee sources of supply unless one is willing to use them. And the prospect of an American military intervention in the Middle East is so threatening to my hopes for the future that I would be willing to swallow my populist political principles and *give* Swearingen that 50 billion in guaranteed profits to build a domestic synthetic fuels industry, if that would reduce the chances of a Mideast war.

* * *

The issue separating the mixed economy moderates from the free market purists was not resolved during the conference. The resulting ambiguity is significant, because it accurately represents a deep division in current national opinion as well as in Congress and the new Reagan administration. Voter dissatisfaction with the Democrats can be traced, I believe, to the recent history of sluggish economic growth and the resulting phenomenon of "stagflation." It is commonplace among economists to trace this slowdown in rates of economic growth to a too large proportion of our gross national product going into direct consumption, and too small a proportion going into investment in new industry and technology. The main rationale behind the massive tax cuts being proposed by the Reagan administration is to increase savings and investment. But these "across the board" cuts do not merely transfer money from food stamps to savings for new machinery. They also undermine those very programs of governmental investment which promise to provide new sources of energy over the middle and long term.

The free market purists thus appear to have captured the Presidency and the Congress, and are taking us down the road of incalculable risk outlined by Swearingen. But the issue is not really settled, even within the Reagan administration. The likes of Swearingen and Ramo are not without influence within the Republican Party, the Reagan administration, and Congress. One can only hope such mixed economy moderates within the Republican Party will be able to regain their traditional influence and reinstate the promising long term governmental investment programs before we are left with the stark choice of using our massive firepower, or of sitting helplessly in the dark and the cold.

–Fred W. Hallberg

Light and Power, by Ian MacMillan. Missouri. $7.95

The old man in Ian MacMillan's "The Drive" says, "Whole world's always been in a mess . . . but now it's in a mess that don't make no goddam sense." The stories in *Light and Power*, winner of the Associated Writing Program's second annual short fiction contest, reflect a sincere effort to make sense out of the mess. The sense is made by turning inward, by confrontation with oneself and one's own powers.

These stories are, noticeably, men's stories. They are of men dealing with nature, with themselves, with other men. Women are approached only in the abstract or, more often, as a cautioning, worrying mother figure. "The Gravity of the Situation" is a story about a boy's initiation into an understanding of sex, yet this is done without contact with the female—not even so much as a conversation. The only character with a wife is Calder of "The Rock," and she is warning him against attempting to prove himself, the only genuine thing he ever seems to do.

Yet as a female reader I did not feel diminished by the exclusion of women from these stories. The treatment of sex is sensitive and thoughtful, even when the subject is a retarded man, possessor of a "mammoth sausage" of "mythical" proportions ("Idiot's Rebellion"), and in "The Sacrifice," where a lifeguard struggles against sexual feelings as he tries to save a girl's life, I felt the exclusion of a "relationship" was necessary to the story. The primary confrontation is with *self*, and thus there is a certain honesty in the exclusion of female characters.

The stories have a pioneer flavor, concentrating on basic, primitive drives and fears, often in a rural setting. They have common themes; the major one is man's coming of age, at whatever age that occurs, through meeting and overcoming resistance—either resistance from authority or forces of nature, or from created resistance where none is apparent. Along with the entry into autonomy there is a rebellion against authority, be it parental, societal or institutional, or the authority of nature. "Corrigan's Progress" is the story of a complete rebel who never does reconcile himself to society. Violence makes the story of his "progress" real, as if we were holding a human life in our hands, trembling and exposed, rather than a book.

The image of light is subtly repeated throughout the stories. Understanding is a sunrise; when a girl dies in "The Sacrifice," light is a "trivial flash." "The Rat's Eye" deals most strikingly with the image when the hero, who by profession kills rats in a most disgusting manner, sees in a rat's eye the "almost-light, the infinity, as if its eye were the convex doorway into another universe." All nine stories are, as the foreword by Richard Yates suggests, "sensitive and responsible." Mr. MacMillan succeeds in extracting his own measure of sense out of the whole mess. *—Patricia O'Donnell*

Saul Bellow, Drumlin Woodchuck, by Mark Harris. Georgia. $9.95.

This is a curiosity, a book about a book not written—a biography of Saul Bellow by the novelist, Mark Harris. Harris proposed, Bellow disposed . . . inch by inch. He didn't say yes, he didn't say no, and Harris dangled through ten years of close reading, note-taking, telephone calls, unanswered letters, occasional meetings. Sometimes it seems as if Harris jumped, despite warnings, into a Kafka story re-told by Bellow. Right from the start Saul says he doesn't want anyone to write anything about his life, let alone a full-scale biography; right from the start he doesn't *forbid* it. So there's enough ambivalence for anybody, enough for an ambulance. Writers I have known are, in their lives, cuckoo—whether by nature or necessity, who knows? If you're interested in the writer, you're interested in his cuckooness. For whatever reasons. Maybe cuckooness itself is what interests you, it being the common lot of lives, but lifted to dazzles of gossip when it's about the celebrated. Not that there's no real substance here; there is, some of and by Harris, some when Saul Bellow is quoted. Often when he speaks we hear the voices of his prophets in all the wilderness of his tales. For the rest, the book is more enjoyable than it seems, and much sadder. *–K.L.*

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"Sunset Boulevard"

(Between the Ides of March & April)

The miracle of American technology links us with millions of movie-goers around the world. It's the motion picture that shows us all not only how we look and sound, but, more important, how we feel! When it achieves its most noble intent, film reveals that people everywhere share common dreams and emotions. Tonight, I applaud all who create, make, distribute, exhibit, and attend movies . . . Film is forever!
—Ronald Reagan

"*Beware the Ides of March!*" Everybody knows that, don't they? Certainly I heard it long before I read Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" where in Rome, in a public place, the warning of an impending assassination is first shouted from the crowd—and not clearly heard by Caesar or his retinue.

"Fellow," Cassius orders the soothsayer, "come from the throng; look upon Caesar." And, facing *the man*, he repeats the warning. Apparently not one to take to heart such a prophecy (which turned out to be a grevious error and accounts for the power of the homily ever since), "He's a dreamer," says Caesar, the *Pontifex Maximus*. "Let us leave him. Pass."

The Ides of March—what I remembered was that you needed to watch out the whole last part of the month (and considering this year, I'm still not sure that's not true), but what I have found out now is, in fact, the Ides are the 15th of the month. And along with them are also the Kalends and the Nones; there are three such particular days in every month of the year. The terms were a way of counting dates in the ancient Roman calandar, which (and there has got to be some irony here) was revised by the self-same Caesar into—essentially—the calandar we use today—the Julian.

So it was scheduled, the 2nd day before the Kalends of April—March 30—to have been the occasion of the 53rd Academy Awards. As it transpired that date turned out to be another American occasion, now also terrifyingly familiar, nauseously banal. The show, rightfully, did not go on; it was the 1st day before the Kalends of April when it did.

After Mr. Reagan's introduction (taped two weeks previously and specifically requested by the White House to be used on this gratefully euphoric second day; there were, after all, three hundred million people in 63 countries watching) came the first production number, a splashy "Hurray for Hollywood." And the lead to that, a bridge from "film is forever," a series of film clips were put on the screen. The classic scenes from the classic films, the lines spoken by the classic stars, they must be familiar to all the people now old enough to have been raised before television—when movies were the visual entertainment expression of American Culture.

In 1981 the nostalgia of these clips, the consciousness of the past in this segment of the audience, set a tone for the awards which Fay Kanin, President of the Academy, reinforced. "You know, it's hard to believe that in the span of a single lifetime the movies have come all the way from the silent genius of Griffith and Chaplin to the sight and sound explosion of a 'Star Wars'."

Going on to extol the value of the good films nominated (the films up for awards are generally the cream of Hollywood)—the same films that Mr. Reagan was addressing himself to, obviously—she hints then of the future: "In this age of marvels we are moving into—electronic wizardry . . . dazzling technology . . . that may change life as we know it . . . I hope, and I never felt it more than tonight, that our movies will help us preserve that most essential marvel—our humanity."

Reserving for the moment my qualms about *inhumanity* in many of our "movies," look at what she's foreseeing . . . remembering what Jack Valenti said at that meeting of the Los Angeles World Affairs Council in December of 1980: "At the end of this century we will have become an all electronic society. The concept of digital, that is making films *without film*, will be part of our lives." (italics mine) Remembering what Mr. Emanuel Gerard from the office of the president of the fifth largest multiple cable system, Warner Communications, called the "Media Room"—that's at home, that's where the people will be sitting and looking. Part of the form—the impact of a motion picture—is the experience of the dark theatre and being part of an audience; in no way is the "Media Room" that. So, in the future, at the friendly neighborhood theatre they will be breeding bats in the dark rafters?

* * *

For me, the 53rd occasion was a sort of downer, a tone of sadness larded in with the nostalgia and sentimentality. In spite of protestations that it was a paean, it was in fact more a dirge. Can you imagine a subdued Willie Nelson? Singing his song he looked out of place—nervous.

And there were all those old pictures, with stars who are now dead—John Wayne, Clark Gable, Mae West, the great western director, John Ford. There was Henry Fonda, old—walking tenderly with a cane and suddenly there was Henry Fonda at twenty on the screen. There was Robert Redford, the young, receiving the directorial award ("Ordinary People") from directors King Vidor and George Cukor, two of the old. And the three of advanced years from Acme Tool & Manufacturing, their award in the scientific/technical area, voted by the Academy Board of Governors, for one of the oldest machines in film's finishing stage, the optical printer. And they stand in contrast to the young turks responsible for the "electronics and wizardry" of George Lucas produced superfilms. (Incidentally, it was recently announced in *Variety* that Lucas' whole organization had left town, meaning Hollywood. The story noted that Lucas was never much part of the old town anyway, but still . . . to leave Mecca for Marin County?)

Carson's remarks—couched in

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the form of a joke—about the just wounded and reputedly watching president's approval of slashing the arts support budget carried an edge. In fact such cuts will affect the production of all kinds of only sometimes commercially viable documentary and short fiction films. Nineteen-eighty-one has not been one of those good years; the afterburn from a long actors' strike last year and the leaching out of bad feelings at the settlement; the writers out now, for the same reasons (no recognition from the producers of the creative people's part of the cable feast—they still say they won't pay out before they know what they are going to take in); the directors in negotiation but, probably, foundering on the same rock when their contract expires at the end of June.

And what about the first quarter box office reports, released in this bummer month? January had been bad, down 2½% (more than 11% when ticket inflation is figured in), continuing the falling attendance of last year. But the *Variety* headline the 6th day before the Kalends of April: "BOX OFFICE SLUMP ACCELERATES—March Domestic Tally the Worst in 4 Years." The worst March in 10 years in terms of actual ticket sales, it was lowest in terms of inflated ticket dollars in more than 4 years. Overall the first quarter is down 6% (14% plus in inflated dollars) and this off-season business is where a year is often tallied, the Spring and summer surges generally being pretty okay any year. The portents are not good.

* * *

Among those clips in the beginning was one from "Sunset Boulevard," Billy Wilder's 1950 *film noir* about the film industry. It was down-on-his-luck writer William Holden's recognition, on meeting the old star (Gloria Swanson), of who she once was. "Norma Desmond," he says (looking about 18 years old), "you used to be in silent pictures—you used to be big!"

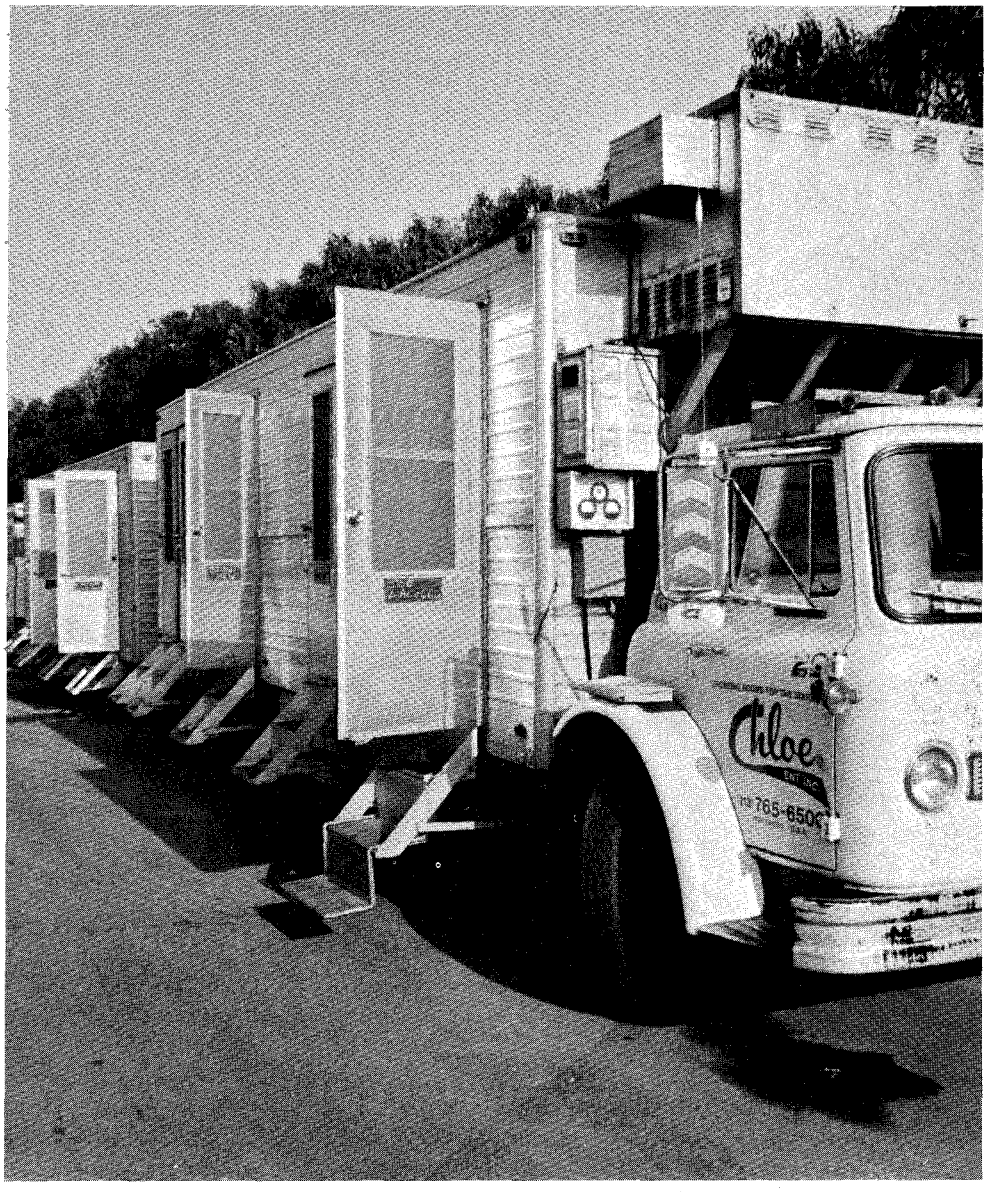
"I *am* big," she replies; "it's the pictures that got small . . ."

That's not true these days, of course; the pictures get bigger and bigger and more and more alike; their content designed to reach the broadest (by the same token less discriminating) audience. And the thud of these monoliths, when they fall, is loud.

At the awards Carson joked about the United Artists' executives in the audience, saying you could tell them from the yellow ribbons they wore—waiting for "Heaven's Gate" to be (re)released. And, what do you know, on the 4th day after the Ides of April, a whole page in *Variety*, in dignified type face: "United Artists is proud to present the World Premier of Michael Cimino's 'Heavens Gate,' closing night of Filmex [the half market/half film festival that is Hollywood's own, April 23, 1981]." World premier indeed, it was an hour and 40 minutes they cut out of what had opened with great fanfare in November 1980, and been taken out of release the next day—rocking the industry to its core, incidentally. Remember what Mr. Bach of U/A said back in January: "With ninety minutes less, you will see a big difference." *THUD!* The first box-office reports—awful, the word is that U/A is going to eat 40 million.

Or there is John Boorman's just released "Excalibur;" how many million for tin armor that everybody who ever devoured Prince Valiant—the comic strip—or *The Story of Roland* knows is just not right. Nobody just runs around in full armor and rides blooded Irish horses to joust on . . . .

In the days of King Arthur they may well have pulled swords out of rocks, but it took a small hoist to put knight to war horse (built like trucks those horses were). And if he was downed, often, with all that weight, he was finished, just as a turtle on its back cannot regain its feet. Small things to pick at in this 5th/6th century "Star Wars"; I have read how Boorman took great pains with a score from Wagner which is, in fact, impressive, but still the film didn't work for me. In contrast to a kind of foolish Merlin (Nicol Williamson playing Alec Guiness), Arthur *et al* were too serious and too thin—no knights like I knew. The movie is bloody as all



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hell, too: armored arms hacked off to show the pulsing stump; even in the more or less jaded preview audience there were gasps as a carrion bird plucks out the eye of a hanged decaying corpse. And what about the great resounding clank, when a war axe was sunk in a breast plate—there, *see* the arterial blood pulse. *De gustibus non est disputandum*, the picture's doing great!

2.

". . . film is forever . . ."

"Sunset Boulevard" is quintessential *film noir!* In that 1950 Wilder film, Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson), faded silent star, lives as a kind of exile in one of those rococo palaces in Hollywood, attended to as butler by her once famous director (Erich von Stroheim). She hires a young, cynical, unsuccessful writer (William Holden) to work on her screenplay, to be the vehicle for her triumphant return to stardom. Making a complex story short, in this strange ugly inturned look at the film world—an infinity of mirrors—after an affair and the-telling-to-her-face-of-the-truth, she murders the writer (whose dead body, floating face down in a swimming pool, is the famous opening scene of the film), the act snapping whatever strands of sanity still exist in her.

Her surrender is a strange demented *tour de force* of acting! Descending the stairs outside the front doors of the mansion, police waiting and newsreel cameras rolling, she speaks as though this is the first scene of her come-back film. Addressing the crew and Mr. De Mille (Cecil B., who played a cameo role), she says how happy she is to be back in the world of film—which is her life. Saying how she will never leave it again, that irony is locked in with a lynch pin because one of the themes of "Sunset Boulevard" is the illusion film finally is.

As a fascinating sideband irony in all this, resonating within "Sunset Boulevard" is a scene taken from "Queen Kelly" (1928), a silent film that Gloria Swanson produced (and starred in) at the height of her career. Never really finished, that picture was written and directed by Erich Von Stroheim, so in "Sunset Boulevard" the relation between the two is repeated in fiction. Accepted (and respected) as an actor, as filmmaker Von Stroheim was one of the legion whose genius Hollywood trampled on with heavy feet. Because of excess and blindness and fear and lack of faith (remember this is all back in 1928) a failed and truncated version of the original "Queen Kelly" is what was patched together to release. That's all that exists, and withal is considered a classic example of Von Stroheim's artistry, never fully realized in his lifetime. All this, of course, is another part of what "Sunset Boulevard" is all about.

* * *

Characterized as Romantic Realism, *film noir* flourished in the late forties and early fifties. According to Alan Casty in *Development of Film*, the genre "reveals a growing sophistication . . . foreshadowing the content explosions of the sixties and seventies. . . . The thirties' genres of tough guy films and social protest films are given a new tone, more psychoanalytic, more cynical, more brutal . . . the corruption of society is taken as a given condition beyond direct protest . . . it is embedded in a cleverly commercial context that emphasizes the tricks and turns of audience engaging, entertaining plot . . . basically displays of manner, rather than matter . . . the distinctive hothouse lushness . . . betrays a decadence of style that matches the decadence of their contents—a cynical and florid stylization within *the confines of the commercial production system*. (italics mine) . . . films of nighttime darkness and desperation, cruelly expert in their manipulation of violent emotion and depravity. . . ."

So, as it was also in the late forties when *film noir* flourished, these days the good life in Hollywood seems to be in jeopardy, even if the reasons are different. Down the streets blow the winds of cable/digital fear; they investigate wide and high (among the industry high-ups) use/abuse of drugs; the box office is weak. And as another historical similarity, don't Casty's characteristics hold for much of what is released today? It's a hands-on push to bring people into the theatres to see pictures made "within the commercial confines of the production system," exploiting violence, depravity, bloodshed.

For instance, take "Thief," a stylish *tour de force* from triple threat director-writer-producer Michael Mann. It is a memorable debut for not, for me, the right reasons. Portraying an interval of time previous to the end of the life of a professional thief, James Caan (you've seen the tv ad: "I only steal ice!"), with gritty realism (a lot of coldly passionate killings), and complex caricatures (not characters), there's also a great deal of finally boring process of how to drill through vanadium steel safes. Given its imposing musical score by Tangerine Dream, its superior photographic imagery, and the performances of the actors, it is an excellent example of the mechanical arts/crafts of film—but it's empty, and finally an abstraction that's unreal. I feel manipulated by its violence, by its unremitting view of a corrupt world in

WILLIAM
PITT
ROOT

DON'T BLINK

Here the redwoods
    rise so quick
my headlights
    don't even
try to climb them.

The road's center
    markers, inset
with fluorescent gold,
    show up in
the passing
    lights like fire,
as planned.

To put them in, men
    first had to bow
among these trees,
    whether they
noticed them or not.

The average
    American marriage
endures as long as
    the average Sequoia
takes adding 1/16''
    to its 30' girth.

Driving
    down this road,
don't blink.

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which audience sympathy is cathected to an inveterate criminal.

Or "The Postman Always Rings Twice," adapted (again) from the 1930s novel by James M. Cain, touted for a long time before it was finished as the SEX film. "I'm going to shoot this movie like an 'X' and cut it like an 'R'," director Rafelson said, and the essence of that statement appeared in the trades again and again. Along with that was Jack Nicholson starring (with Jessica Lange—you remember "King Kong" [new version]), Sven Nykvist as D.P., the old durable and pre-sold property itself. But in spite of the again superior technical expertise and the beautiful photography, the picture falls apart with story holes. As to the sex—it ain't true—or perhaps I am just too jaded. . . .

* * *

"A miracle of American Technology," Mr. Reagan said at the outset, linking us (America) with "moviegoers around the world." Not only, he said, do our movies show how we *look and sound,* but also how *we feel!* There's the rub for me with films like "Thief" or "Back Roads" or "The Postman always Rings Twice." I know both the President of the United States and the President of the Motion Picture Academy were not talking about the image of us in these films or, slightly watered down, in much commercial television. But in contrast to the impact of an "Ordinary People," which will probably be selectively distributed overseas, these other movies with all their exploitations have the sizzle that will sell overseas. They also sell a rather awful picture of us. Or, heaven forfend, is this world so technically well reproduced on the screen, the real world, an artistic abstraction stripped of soft focus veneer? My rose-colored glasses!

One muses about the ethics of it—why does one undertake the enormous effort entailed in making a comment with visual or verbal symbols? And does such creation imply some responsibility to what's being said? If there's a hint that life is following art(?), that people are employing methods sprung from the heads of the film writers, that the world of the films is becoming the world outside the theatres, then does the creator have second thoughts about the essence of the message being picked up out there? Balanced against potential box-office take, if you throw a few people in with the lions and let the audience see them get eaten, what's the take if you opt not to exploit blood lust by letting the eating happen off-stage (-camera)? And there's always this vague feeling, this dangerous nostalgia, that in other times it was less crass, and more simple . . . but, given the concept of paradox, the truths in nostalgia are always suspect.

What of sensitive real films? Lee Grant's "Tell Me A Riddle," John Sayles' (an excellent prose writer) "The Return of the Secaucus Seven," Louis Malle's (although maybe this doesn't exactly fit since it's a Canadian production) "Atlantic City," the ones which don't achieve the "Ordinary People" status and return? They are due for comment in this ongoing narrow-cast journal of film. Because there are more than hints: they are an endangered species; they are low priority items. Without some guarantee of bankability, they are too high risk (that strange irony of less risk in 20 million than 3), *if* the theatres go dark. Unless the art house exhibitors manage to maintain. . . . These are the films that Reagan and others are talking about being the good word that millions see—but millions don't, and if they did how many are going to see depths, understand, sit still for the complexity?

The awards were a natural forum for Mr. Reagan, even before the terrible events that postponed them one day. Inextricably linked to Hollywood where, if it's not the place he started, it's certainly where he got his fame. If the industry never had the highest opinion of his acting talent, an *actor* he *is,* now playing *the role* of his career. . . . The stakes are very high . . . a matter of life and death—perhaps. . . .

The president, once a California archetype, has become an American archetype. Tough, paternal, brave (against gun control still), loving, God-fearing—one hopes it's all true as one remembers Mr. Reagan, the actor. And there's his humor, self deprecating, whimsical—*one of the boys, just remember who's president!* But, his humor—basically one-liners—it goes along with his simplistic black and white 1950s picture of the world. That's dangerous in this 1980s shades-of-grey world. It's the simplicity that frightens me, the simplicity in his opening statements. In the grey world there's danger inherent in an apparent blanket endorsement—look at the pictures (self-images) of ourselves in some of our films. This time with its *nouveau film noir* is similar to the last go-round, the '50s—the Eisenhower years—but it isn't the same world.

Act III, Sc.1 Rome. A street before the capitol.

Flourish. Enter Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Casca, Decius, and others, including the Soothsayer.

Cae. *The ides of March are come.*

Soothsayer: *Ay, Caesar, but not gone.*

3.

. . . film has really now come on hard times which will get harder, and eventually—with the possible exception of Super Movies for Super Entertainment to be seen in Superdromes—perhaps *real* movies in *real* theatres will be a memory. If Film is Forever was the official awards motif, for me it was the clip of the last scene from "Sunset Boulevard"—the classic *film noir.* It's about the industry and its own exploitation of people, and is itself, through manipulation and exploitation of the audience, designed for crass commercial purposes. That scene which was the capper of Academy Awards night is actually an illusion in an illusion.

Then, when Gloria Swanson is coming down those stairs—as the stairs on the stage of the Los Angeles Music Pavilion the stars and presenters come down—the theme of the awards, is film forever? Or is it the irony of the image of the insane old star (with the industry an accessory in the self destruction) being taken by the police for a murder with a handgun?

Carson said in closing: "Because film is forever let Norma Desmond have the last word:"

> *. . . I just want to tell you all how happy I am to be back in the studio . . . making a picture again! You don't know how much I've missed all of you . . . and I promise you I'll never desert you again. You see, this is my life—it always will be . . . nothing else. . . . Just us, and the cameras, and those wonderful people out there in the dark. . . . All right Mr. De Mille, I'm ready for my close-up. . . .*

Von Stroheim watches . . . the theatres are empty. . . .

—*Lawrence Sturhahn*

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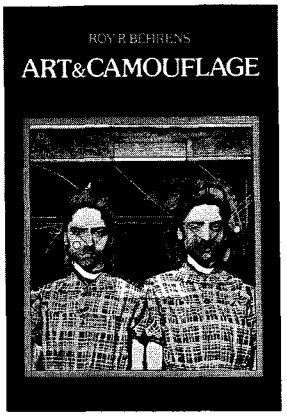
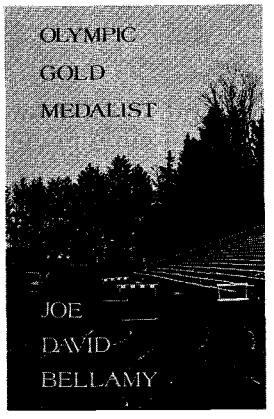
BOOKS FROM THE NAR





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